

WALTER BENN MICHAELS: AGAINST DIVERSITY!

THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

BARRETT & COLLINS:
The Truth
About Rudy
and 9-11



THE WAR MAKERS

Syria and Iran are vicious sponsors of terrorism. Yet no Middle East solution is possible without them. The Case for Negotiation **BY FLYNT LEVERETT**



SEPTEMBER 2006

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*"To say nothing, especially
when speaking, is half the art
of diplomacy."*

— WILL DURANT

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Cover design by Aaron Morales

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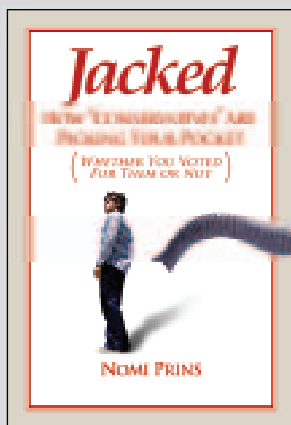
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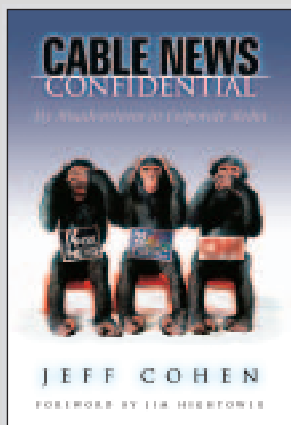
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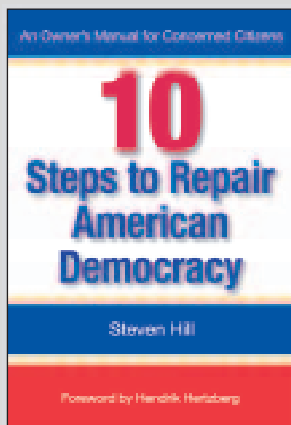
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A Rendezvous with Failure

MANY LIBERALS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE BEEN smitten with political envy. The conservative movement and Republican Party have seemed so much shrewder in their use of language, tougher in their tactics, and better organized than their progressive and

Democratic counterparts. Perhaps so. But let us put to rest one supposed source of advantage for conservatives: the coherence of their philosophy. Intellectually, conservatism in the Bush era is a mess.

Only yesterday, it seems, conservative intellectuals were reveling in the audacity of a president who by flexing American muscle abroad, while cutting taxes and seeking to roll back government at home, was following a course they had charted. But conservatives might have remembered, especially when venturing into Mesopotamia, the lesson of ancient fables: Watch what you wish for.

In both foreign and domestic affairs, things are not working out the way conservatives expected. Indeed, in Iraq they are not working at all. The first line of defense in any such situation is a refusal to acknowledge reality. Whether the issue is global warming, rising economic inequality, or the chaos in Baghdad, the conservative in denial has become a stock figure of our public life. Yet, sooner or later, stubborn facts intrude on lovely illusions, and the intellectuals who sought, sold, and celebrated right-wing policies will have to reckon with their failure.

The premise of the Bush foreign policy was that as the only remaining superpower, the United States no longer needed cumbersome alliances and international institutions and could act unilaterally to reshape world politics. Instead of waiting for enemies to attack us at home, we would preemptively strike them

overseas. Instead of negotiating with hostile regimes, we could just replace them. Democracy would have magical effects in the Middle East not seen since the days of Aladdin.

The decision to fight the Iraq War epitomized this frame of mind—at once belligerent and delusional. And the ensuing disaster has epitomized everything wrong with it. A foreign policy that was supposed to demonstrate America's might has become an ongoing source of weakness. The war that was supposed to prevent a rogue state from obtaining nuclear weapons has led two others, Iran and North Korea, to spur their development. And by empowering the Shia in Iraq while tying up U.S. forces there, the Bush strategy has strengthened Iran. Some on the right blame the administration for its execution of the war. But the strategic conception was a blunder from the start.

Like Rumsfeld and company, the intellectuals who agitated for war now have no credible plan for victory. It is not even clear what kind of a triumph for America it would be to stabilize the current Iraqi regime, which includes groups affiliated with the militias responsible for continuing sectarian violence. Bush's aim seems to be to postpone the recog-

nition of failure until he can go home to Texas. Perhaps the eventual blame for failure can then be laid at the door of his successor.

The domestic side of the Bush revolution is also headed toward collapse. Bush's tax cuts, faith-based programs, and support for partial privatization of Social Security all seemed to point toward a counterrevolution against the welfare state. But while the Republicans have cut taxes, they haven't dared to cut spending proportionately. Instead, while putting the nation on a path toward fiscal crisis as the costs of Medicare and Social Security increase, they have come up against the reality that those programs are genuinely popular.

Some on the right now talk about accepting big government and turning it to conservative ends. But given the opposition to taxes and regulation of business in the Republican Party, it seems unlikely that they can create a coherent strategy of that kind. The Medicare prescription drug program is representative of the problem: Enacted without any revenue, the program is a boon for the drug and insurance industry, but a wretchedly bad plan for the elderly. To get effective

government, Americans will have to turn to people who genuinely believe in it.

This fall the voters will have a chance to pass a verdict on the kind of government Republicans have given them. I don't underestimate the political capacities of the conservatives. They may be shrewder, tougher, and

better organized. But they suffer from one grave debility. Their ideas are wrong. **TAP**

— PAUL STARR

The decision for war epitomized this frame of mind, at once belligerent and delusional.

Editors' Note: We're pleased to announce that Bob Kuttner will be dividing his time between the *Prospect*, where he will continue writing and editing as founding co-editor, and *Dēmos*, where he will be a distinguished senior fellow.



*Gitlin's claim
about the Gore
Internet story
is greatly
exaggerated.*

— ALAN ABRAMOWITZ
ATLANTA, GA

Who's Counting?

IN HIS REVIEW OF *LAPDOGS: How the Press Rolled Over for Bush*, [July/August 2006] Todd Gitlin writes that the phony accusation that Al Gore claimed to have invented the Internet appeared in the media more than 4,800 times during the 2000 presidential campaign. Gitlin does not explain how this number was calculated, nor does he indicate the exact time period covered or which media were included. However, a Lexis-Nexis search reveals only 19 mentions of the “Gore-invented-the-Internet” charge in major American newspapers between January 1, 2000, and Election Day. Moreover, the point of several of these articles was that Gore had never made such a claim but that he had been a strong supporter of the development of the Internet. Other articles in which the statement appeared were quoting a joke used by George Bush on the campaign trail. Gitlin’s (and Boehlert’s) claim that the media frequently and uncritically reported this accusation, like the accusation itself, appears to be greatly exaggerated.

ALAN ABRAMOWITZ
*Alben W. Barkley Professor
of Political Science
Emory University
Atlanta, GA*

Todd Gitlin responds: My source for the “more-than-4,800” claim was Boehlert’s *Lapdogs* (p. 160). Maybe I should have checked earlier. Strangely, when I did so just now, Lexis-Nexis turned up neither 4,800-plus entries, nor the 19 that Professor Abramowitz found, but 445. But lest we succumb to the fog of dueling Nexises, I submit that we recall Karl Rove’s principle: When you’re explaining, you’re losing. Insofar as newspapers were saying that Gore was defending himself against a deceitful charge, he sounded, to some undecided population of voters, like an evasive braggart. That was bad enough.

Who's Stressed?

ROBERT KUTTNER [“WHAT’S the Matter with Class,” July/August] criticizes my argument that most Americans don’t have a fundamental economic interest in voting Democratic by arguing that two-thirds of Americans are “economically stressed.” Unfortunately, the data he cites to support his claims are not correct.

First, the real incomes of husband-wife couples in the middle-income quintile have risen substantially (not “barely

stayed even”) from \$58,588 in 1979 to \$71,449 in 2004. This 22-percent increase was largely due to the increased wages and work effort of the wives, while husbands’ hours and pay remained constant.

Second, Kuttner misreads the data from Dew-Becker and Gordon. They show that 45 percent (not “all”) of the economic gains from productivity from 1966 to 2001 went to the top 10 percent and that 36 percent went to the middle three income quintiles.

Third, before we indict modern capitalism because of “risk shifting,” we should consider the countervailing evidence on corporate behavior and employer benefits. Over the past 15 years, the following have remained constant: the share of compensation that private companies pay for health insurance and retirement; the share of full-time, full-year workers participating in company retirement plans; the share of workers who get their health insurance through employer plans; and the share of health insurance premiums that companies pay for their employee coverage.

As I say on the PPI Web site, overstating the case of how poorly the economy has performed is an occupational hazard of progressive commentators. Inequality has risen dramatically over the last several decades, and there are plenty of needs not being met. But by presenting an overly negative picture of the financial stress faced by average Americans, average Americans won’t think that we’re talking about them—and they are right.

STEPHEN ROSE
*Senior Economic Fellow,
ThirdWay*

Robert Kuttner responds:

I have long admired Steve Rose’s work on inequality. I’m puzzled by his recent New Democrat tangent, acrobatically putting the best possible face on middle-class pocket-book losses, and disparaging broad social programs as pay dirt for Democrats.

Rose concedes that when couples work hundreds of additional hours annually to stay even, that reflects lost living standards. But in his DLC paper claiming only 23 percent of Americans would benefit from Democratic social programs, he slyly includes only “working-age” people, which conveniently omits Social Security, Medicare, and college aid. Read Rose closely. He misstates what’s happening with employer-provided benefits, where health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs are shifted to employees, and 401(k) plans are replacing pensions. A tax-sheltered savings account that can run out of money is not a pension. The broad middle class would welcome government help on all these fronts.

There’s a lot more to rebut. Watch for Rose’s upcoming exchange with Larry Mishel and me at www.prospect.org.

Correction: In Matthew Yglesias’s article, “The Price Is Wrong” [July/August], Lawrence Lindsay’s prediction of the cost of the war in Iraq was mistakenly cited as \$100 million to \$200 billion. It was \$100 billion to \$200 billion.

Letters to the editors should be sent to letters@prospect.org or mailed to The Editors, The American Prospect, 2000 L St., NW, Suite 717, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Up Front



CONDI'S READING LIST

CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S BOLD JUNE 21 PROCLAMATION that violence in Lebanon merely represented the "birth pangs of a new Middle East" was a minor diplomatic fiasco, prompting denunciations and outrage from around the Muslim world.

But where did she come by the odd turn of phrase? Lefties may smell a hint of Karl Marx, who wrote in the preface to *Das Kapital* that "society ... can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs." Perhaps, then, the secretary of state was offering an homage to neoconservatism's Trotskyite origins.

President Bush's constituency, however, is more likely to recall Jesus' description of the Apocalypse in Matthew 24:6: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All this is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

The key thing, according to the Gospel, is simply to keep one's faith through the chaos even though the devout will, like the contemporary United States of America, "be hated by all nations." This is fine if you foresee eternal paradise at the end of the road, but those of us not expecting the imminent end of the world would probably prefer fewer pangs and more stability.

— MATTHEW YGLESIAS

LOUD AND PROUD, I

Facing a strong electoral headwind and approval ratings dipping near the levels enjoyed by Mikhail Gorbachev in his final days, congressional Republicans have, to put it mildly, a bit of a branding problem heading into the November elections. Orders from on high—that is, from the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC)—have dictated that GOP incumbents and challengers alike focus on local issues and eschew explicit identification with the national party. Congressman Tom Reynolds, facing a serious challenge in his moderate New York district, is following that strategy to a tee—he released an ad in July that never mentioned his party affiliation. Slightly complicating the incumbent's gambit, however, is Reynolds' current role as *chairman of the NRCC*. As *The Hill* pointed out, other members of the House GOP leadership, including Majority Whip Roy Blunt and Conference Chairwoman Deborah Pryce, are running ads on their Web sites that similarly neglect to mention the fact that they're Republicans. Call it an inconvenient truth.

LOUD AND PROUD, II

Speaking of GOPers standing tall, in July, a Republican running for Senate anonymously blasted President Bush at a lunch with journalists, criticizing the adminis-

tration's handling of Iraq, Katrina, the budget, the country—everything. When asked whether he would let Bush campaign for him, he responded "probably not," and described the "R" after his name as a scarlet letter. Alas, he didn't stay anonymous for long. A classic off-the-record/on-background terminological miscommunication led to the revelation of the candidate's identity within 24 hours: Maryland's lieutenant governor, **Michael Steele**. A



spokesman for Steele, Doug Heye, went into damage control mode: "When

he agrees with the Republican administration, he absolutely does so. When he disagrees, he speaks his mind." Absolutely! It's just that disagreements are off the record. But we reckon Steele—a right winger running in a blue state—*wanted* to be outed, and the press abetted him. Which gives him points over Tom Reynolds.

STILL USEFUL IDIOTS

Pennsylvania progressives turned off by Bob Casey's relatively moderate posture just may get a real choice this fall, thanks to the Green Party. Candidate Carl Romanelli, whose platform includes universal health care, immediate withdrawal from Iraq, robust support of abortion rights, and legalized gay marriage, stands a decent shot at get-

ERIC PALMA; GREG WHITESELL/UPI/LANDOV

THE QUESTION: BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIME: WHAT'S THE ONE CLASS BUSH SHOULD AUDIT?

"Remedial high school English. As Bush himself said of high school, 'The illiteracy level of our children are appalling.'"

— **Congressman Chris Van Hollen**
of Maryland



"U.S. Constitution: Theory and Practice. Emphasis on the limits of presidential authority. Midterm, final, term paper. No prerequisites."

— **Michael Bérubé**, Paterno Family professor
in literature, Penn State University



"A course on Lyndon Johnson's presidency to learn the dangers of prosecuting a war without a clear plan for victory."

— **Bruce Bartlett**, author,
Impostor: How George W. Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy



ting on the ballot thanks to \$66,000 in donations to the Luzerne County Green Party, which is funding his petition drive. As it happens, *The Philadelphia Daily News'* Will Bunch reported that every dime of that money was donated by conservative Republicans sporting long records of support for various Republican politicians, including Casey's opponent Rick Santorum. Ah, the Greens. *Plus ça change ...*

WAR COUNT

In a July *Meet the Press* appearance, Newt Gingrich characterized the current outbreak of fighting in the Middle East as but a single battle in "World War III," which pits the United States and Israel against the nefarious forces of Islam. The theory proved controversial on the right. "I think that those who argue this is World War IV," observed *National Review's* Jonah Goldberg, "have a better argument." According to the IV-er school of thought, pioneered by Norman Podhoretz and James Woolsey in 2002, the Cold War should actually count as World War III. This controversy will no doubt roil conservative historiography for years to come, but on one thing the right agrees: Israel's fight against Iranian-backed militias in Lebanon is identical to America's fight on behalf of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq. Only the leaders of

Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Iran, and Iraq, along with a handful of lunatic liberals, can't see this fundamental truth.

ROSY RUMMY

Donald Rumsfeld on Iraq,



August, 2006: "I have never painted a rosy picture. I have been very measured in my words, and you'd have a dickens of a time trying to find instances where I have been excessively optimistic."

Rumsfeld, December 2005:

"Which view of Iraq is more accurate? The pessimistic view of the so-called elites in our country—or the more optimistic view expressed by millions of Iraqis and by the some 155,000 U.S. troops on the ground?"

Rumsfeld on Iraq, November 2005: "The strategy is working, and we should stick to it."

Rumsfeld, November 2004: "Success in Fallujah will deal a blow to the terrorists in the country, and should move Iraq further away from

a future of violence."

Rumsfeld on American troops in Iraq, February 2003: "There is no question but that they would be welcomed."

Rumsfeld on Afghanistan, December 2002: "The Taliban are gone. The al-Qaeda are gone."

And our favorite, Rumsfeld on Iraq, November 2002: "I can't tell you if the use of force in Iraq today would last five days, or five weeks, or five months, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that." **TAP**

STEVE KING'S WILD-N-CRAZY SUMMER

Iowa Congressman Steve King, one of the most conservative members of the House, has worked hard to build a reputation as an outré right-wing quotemeister. (He's the statesman who said the Abu Ghraib abuse "amount[ed] to hazing" and called Joe McCarthy "a hero for America.") This summer was no vacation for King. Herein, some highlights:

"My wife lives here with me, and I can tell you ... she's at far greater risk being a civilian in Washington, D.C., than an average civilian in Iraq."

ON PROGRESS IN IRAQ, JUNE 12

"There probably are not 72 virgins in the hell he's at, and if there are, they probably all look like Helen Thomas."

ON THE DEATH OF ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI, JUNE 17

"We could also electrify this wire with the kind of current that would not kill somebody, but it would simply be a discouragement for them to be fooling around with it. We do that with livestock all the time."

ON CONSTRUCTING A SOUTHERN BORDER FENCE, INCLUDING BARBED WIRE, JULY 11

"How many Americans died at the hands of those that did get across the desert? I can tell you the answer is in multiples of the victims of September 11 ... We have a slow-motion Holocaust on our hands."

ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, MAY 27

Funny Business

BY MARK SCHMITT

WHAT WOULD THE LEGENDARY LABOR LEADER Walter Reuther have said if 40 years ago he was told that American business was going to spend millions to register workers and encourage them to vote? He would probably have been ecstatic: “They’re spending

their money to turn out *my* people?!”

And indeed, since World War II, business usually stayed far away from that kind of politics. Corporations and their political action committees provided the money that drove campaigns—for both parties, but more exclusively to Republicans after 1994—and that was where their involvement ended.

But recently, big business has quietly become a political actor in a new way, organizing employees and getting them to vote in what they see as the interests of their employers. For 2006, the Business Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC) has a goal of registering 2.1 million new “pro-business voters” in 15 targeted states. In 2004, the BIPAC program registered 16,000 voters in Iowa, a state George W. Bush won by 13,000 votes. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s “VoteForBusiness.com” program in 2004 set up 400 Web sites for companies and local chambers with information on candidates’ positions on issues that matter to employees, like tort reform, energy policy, and of course, “the death tax.” This year, they’ll set up approximately 1,000 sites.

IN THEIR NEW BOOK, *ONE PARTY COUNTRY*, Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten of the *Los Angeles Times* describe this phenomenon and the underlying change in attitude that made it possible: “Workers understood that manufacturing jobs were evaporating,” they write. “They no longer dared dismiss out of

hand arguments that what was good for their employers was also good for them.”

This is an unnerving challenge to the idea that working people vote Republican because they put social values above their economic interest. In many cases, they see their economic interest as bound up in their employers’ interests. Many coal miners in West Virginia in 2000 defied their union and helped George W. Bush win the state—and the presidency—because of his support from their bosses.

This new loyalty comes at a time when it’s far less likely to be reciprocated with secure employment. In Reuther’s day, the relationship between business and workers was driven by the assumptions that General Motors and Ford would always be there and would always be profitable, and the worker’s interest was to capture more of that profit. Today’s insecurity—the sense that GM could go bankrupt, and that any job, blue- or white-collar, could disappear—drives a panicked sense of loyalty that often overrides any sense of class solidarity. The challenge in this is profound.

The tragedy of this new business involvement in politics is not in its complete merger with the Republican Party, but that the shortsighted agenda it sup-

ports is as bad for business as it is for workers. The issues that these Web sites put before employees—repealing the “death tax,” expanded oil drilling, tort reform—may serve the short-term benefit of investors, but the consequent fiscal debacle, radical income inequality, health-care mess, energy insecurity, and overall level of risk is a great danger to future economic prosperity.

There is a parallel between the short-sighted, reckless politics of the Bush era and the short-time horizons and imprudence of modern corporate leaders. The pressure from Wall Street to “meet or beat” quarterly earnings estimates drives everything, and highly paid CEOs who expect to move on to the next job in a few years don’t think about their company’s prospects into the next decade.

THERE ARE MODEST ATTEMPTS BY Democrats to reconstruct the adversarial worker-employer politics of another era: the belated push to increase the minimum wage, the campaign against Wal-Mart. But these won’t change the overall picture.

Perhaps the best hope is to challenge or divide businesses and offer an alternative that supports the interests of workers in restored security and opportunity as well as the interests of business in sustained prosperity. Such a new social contract would include a robust universal health-care program that would lift those costs off the employer, and the repair of broken systems like unem-

ployment insurance. It would include investment in new sustainable energy technologies and education to generate real economic growth. And Democrats should find a way to challenge businesses to explain to their workers why the GOP agenda is in anyone’s interest. All this is easier said than done, but the urgency of it should be clear: They’re out there registering 2.1 million new voters. **TAP**

*Why are businesses
registering more
than 2 million
workers to vote? A
great challenge lies
within the answer.*

Complete Sentence

BY KRISTINE A. HUSKEY

A WEEK AFTER THE SUPREME COURT DELIVERED A stinging rebuke to the Bush administration in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, holding that the military tribunals it had fashioned to try Guantanamo detainees were illegal, I went to the base to visit my detainee-clients

and to inform them joyfully of the Court's ruling. To say the least, they were unmoved. For them, nothing had changed: Their confidential legal documents had been confiscated, their blankets taken away, they still had no reading material; they continued to have no hope of seeing or talking to their families ever again, or of getting a fair hearing or trial.

And they were right to despair: The administration had already begun its pushback. Despite congratulatory whooping by many, including my own thrill at the decision, the impact of *Hamdan* now appears to have been all but eviscerated.

Stateside, the *Hamdan* decision was widely seen as a leap out of the "War on Terror" morass. The case had been brought by Salim Ahmed Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's alleged driver, protesting the legality of the military commission by which he was to be tried for war crimes. Under the commission rules, Hamdan could have been excluded from his own trial, evidence based on hearsay and torture would have been admissible, and his conviction could have been based on evidence that neither he nor his civilian lawyer ever saw.

The Supreme Court ruled these procedures unlawful because they did not comply with the Uniform Code of Military Justice—a U.S. federal statute—or Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and they had been created without congressional authority. Adding icing on the cake, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England issued a mem-

orandum one week later, "reminding" the military to adhere to Geneva Conventions Article 3. Apparently, the memo was issued without White House approval and much to the chagrin of Bush's retinue.

Ever nimble, the administration began its rout almost immediately. First, the White House asserted that all of its detainee policies already complied with Article 3, which prohibits "humiliating and degrading treatment." White House Spokesman Tony Snow asserted that the military had always been treating the detainees "humanely" and that the England memo was "not really a reversal of policy." Under this line of reasoning, the administration was in compliance with the Geneva Conventions because it believed waterboarding, the use of dogs during interrogation, extreme sleep deprivation, extended isolation, stress positions, forced nudity, and strapping hunger-striking detainees in restraint chairs for more than five hours somehow do not violate the Geneva Conventions. And even if they did, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales urged lawmakers to pass legislation, proposed by the White House, that would exempt U.S. personnel from the application of the War Crimes Act, which subjects those who violate the Conventions to prosecution.

Second, when Congress held hearings in response to *Hamdan*, the White House began to play its familiar game of hardball. At the end of July, the White House came out with draft legislation proposing procedures for the military commissions that, not surprisingly, are much like those that were declared illegal by the Supreme Court. The draft legislation states that it would be "impracticable" to use Uniform Code procedures to try suspected terrorists because they are committed to destroying the country and abusing the legal system, and that the use of hearsay evidence from "fellow terrorists" is necessary to establish guilt.

The Supreme Court's edict in *Hamdan* appears to have had little effect on the executive branch—and even less effect on the detainees. Congress has yet to respond to the White House's proposed legislation regarding the commissions, but even as Senate leaders were taking a hard line in hearings, House Republicans indicated they would be willing to simply ratify the old commission procedures. A compromise is likely, but even then it could take months for any legislation to pass, and anything falling short of the *Hamdan* directives will certainly be challenged by

attorneys for the Guantanamo detainees, taking years to work its way through the courts.

Meanwhile, none of this will help the more than 450 detainees at Guantanamo who haven't even been charged and who may also continue to sit in prison without an end in sight. In practical terms, it is a war of attrition and is just the

victory that the administration sought: detainees in prison indefinitely, without charge or trial. **TAP**

The administration has already begun trying to work its way around the Supreme Court's Hamdan decision.

Kristine A. Huskey has been representing Guantanamo detainees for more than four years. She teaches in the International Human Rights Law Clinic at American University, Washington College of Law.

Dispatches

"Even Gelb's partition alternative is less a plan to save the country than a plan to concede that Iraq is beyond saving."

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Gym Dandy: Will they be waiting in line again in Akron, Ohio, this fall?

CAMPAIGN '06

FIELD NOTES

The best word to describe Democrats' get-out-the-vote plans: emerging.

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

IF YOU LOOK AT THE POLLS AND nothing else, it seems almost self-evident that Nancy Pelosi will be wielding the speaker's gavel come January. Nationally, voters give Democrats a 10-point edge over Republicans in their congressional preferences. Another survey, of 50 swing House districts conducted for National Public Radio, found Democrats leading in the 10 seats they currently hold by a 2-to-1 margin, while Republicans trailed Democrats in the 40 seats they currently hold by a 4 percent margin.

But elections aren't won by public opinion alone. A midterm election is above all an exercise in voter mobiliza-

tion, and looking at the Democrats' emerging get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operations, it's clear that the Democrats still face one tough slog. Though every major player on the Democratic side—the Democratic National Committee (DNC), the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the unions, the environmental groups, the feminist and reproductive rights organizations—can point to a higher level of activity than in the last midterm election, many leading Democrats fear that this year's operation may come up short in two crucial particulars: mobilizing the sometime base vot-

ers, particularly African Americans, and devoting enough resources to the ground game in the growing number of contested House districts.

Problem is, the most important Democratic player in turning out the base in 2004 can't point to a higher level of activity this year; indeed, it has ceased to exist altogether. America Coming Together (ACT), the state-of-the-art GOTV operation funded by such mega-donors as George Soros and Peter Lewis, which pushed Democratic turnout to record, if insufficient, highs in Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania and other battleground states, died a quiet death last year when Soros and Lewis pulled the plug. The problem is compounded by DNC Chairman Howard Dean's decision to distribute the party's own voter turnout efforts among all 50 states rather than concentrate on the states and districts where control of Congress is up for grabs.

Dean's strategy and ACT's demise will make this year's GOTV campaign less centralized, and smaller, than it was in 2004. They have left Democratic operatives in a state of chronic dread. "We could have assumed they [ACT] would do the base vote in certain places," says Karen Johanson, the executive director of the DCCC. "I would have had a good sense of what's going on. I don't have as good a sense now." In 2004 in Ohio, ACT spent \$18.8 million to turn out Democratic voters, and the state is home to hotly contested gubernatorial, senatorial, and House races this fall. "There were about 1.5 million Ohio voters who voted for Kerry [in 2004] who didn't vote in 2002," one senior Democratic operative notes. "You can't take \$18.8 million out of Ohio without huge effect on your ground game. I'm extremely nervous."

"What is the base voter turnout program?" asks one of the foremost political operatives on the Democratic side. "Out-

side of the states with the [ballot initiatives increasing] the minimum wage on the ballot, [the party's] coordinated campaign may not be strong enough to do the base-vote turnout."

TODAY, TWO OF THE PARTY'S THREE national organizations—the DSCC and the DCCC—have more funds on hand than their Republican counterparts, but they focus primarily on buying airtime for their candidates. The task of funding the voter mobilization efforts of the state parties falls chiefly to the DNC, which badly lags the Republican National Committee in fund raising, and whose GOTV strategy has bewildered and infuriated the party's legislative wing. Accordingly, both the DCCC and DSCC—heeding Frederick the Great's maxim that to defend

in the state parties. We've put more money into our 15 [targeted] states than Dean has into his 50 states. We have direct input with the state parties." Similarly, at the DCCC, Chairman Rahm Emanuel, who isn't even on speaking terms with Dean, is hiring legendary turnout consultant Michael Whouley to run an unprecedented field operation for House candidates.

Outside the official party organizations, the America Votes coalition, which first emerged in 2004 to coordinate the campaign activities of the major non-party players on the Democratic side—the AFL-CIO, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Sierra Club, Emily's List, Planned Parenthood, and two dozen others—has solidified its position as the pre-eminent vehicle

was a good program without a clear product that directly connected with people's lives," says John Ryan, on leave from heading the Cleveland AFL-CIO to manage the senatorial campaign of Democratic Congressman Sherrod Brown, about Ohio's minimum wage effort. "We have the minimum wage, which doesn't have as good an operation behind it, but has a clearer outcome that does connect to people."

Still, America Votes, which has a national budget of \$13 million (a figure that doesn't count the far larger combined budgets of its member groups) is only able to mount fully staffed campaigns in Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania, with smaller efforts in Arizona, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. (Unlike ACT, which hired its canvassers, America Votes can only intervene in those states where its volunteer-based member groups are already notably strong.) If, after comparing these lists, you wonder who's going to conduct the minimum wage/base mobilization campaigns in Missouri and Nevada, the answer is labor, which does have a considerable presence in both states. The AFL-CIO, says political director Karen Ackerman, will be involved in more than 200 races in 21 states—a list that may expand to 29 as the number of winnable congressional races continues to grow. Within the Change to Win Federation and labor generally, the SEIU remains the most active international. In California and some other states, Change to Win unions have re-integrated themselves within the local AFL-CIO political operations, but in many states, the creation of a unified list of labor voters—crucial for an effective GOTV campaign—awaits the completion of negotiations between the two national federations.

This year, the America Votes groups will have access to better voter data than they have had before, which they are purchasing at discounted rates from the Data Warehouse, a new venture created by longtime Democratic operatives Harold Ickes and Laura Quinn. Purchasing the voter contact files of ACT, voter behavior data (that is, who voted in which elections) from the various secre-

One effort that will help boost Democratic turnout is a campaign to increase the minimum wage, and such initiatives will be on the ballot in six states.

every place is to defend no place—have now broken with past practice and for the first time are targeting their own resources and talents to voter mobilization in states and districts where they have targeted races.

It's not that the DNC hasn't been busy. According to Karen Finney, its communications director, the national committee has hired field organizers in every state, spent \$8 million updating, correcting, and massaging Voter File, its master data bank on voters ("It didn't work in 2004," says Finney, "the state systems couldn't talk to the national system"), and has \$12 million in hard money set aside for its final fall push in 38 states with key gubernatorial, senatorial, House, and legislative races.

Many Democrats fear, however, that the DNC is spreading its relatively thin resources even thinner. "The RNC has the ability to drop a million bucks into each targeted House race just to do GOTV," one consultant worries. "The reality of the situation," says one staffer familiar with the DSCC operation, "has forced us to make significant investment

through which the party's constituency groups will pull out their voters.

States that the Democrats have prioritized certainly have more field activity now than they did at this point in the last midterm election. "We have 15 full-time field staff" working on voter registration, says Ohio state party chairman Chris Redfern—a significant increase over 2002. America Votes, which never disbanded in Ohio, has 24 full-time organizers of its own, supplementing the organizers of the more than 30 groups that comprise its coalition. As in 2004, however, no other state can match Ohio's density of Democratic organizers—and at this point in 2004, Ohio also had 70 full-time ACT organizers, who are glaringly absent today.

One effort that will help boost Democratic turnout is a campaign—spearheaded by the unions—to increase the minimum wage. Initiatives raising the minimum wage will be on the ballot in six states with key races this November: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Ohio, and possibly in Pennsylvania, too. "We don't have ACT, which

taries of state, and other data and consumer information from a myriad of list vendors, the Data Warehouse will enable Democratic groups to “microtarget” voters with more particularized pitches than they have before. To a certain extent, its efforts parallel those of the DNC—but since the DNC is legally unable to share its data with nonparty groups, and since the Data Warehouse can legally sell its data to state parties, the Ickes-Quinn

firm is a valuable new tool for Democratic campaigns. It also has a long way to go to catch up with the Republican voter file operation, which is centralized within the Republican National Committee.

With data from the Voter File, Democrats have an easier shot of identifying, say, the 1.5 million Ohio Kerry voters who didn’t vote in 2002. The question remains whether their operation will be able to turn out enough of them in 2006. **TAP**

IRAQ

BEYOND HOPE

Summer 2006 may go down as the time when Iraq was lost for good.

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

LESLIE GELB, FORMER PRESIDENT of the Council on Foreign Relations and veteran of policy circles dating back to the Johnson administration, was an unlikely candidate to surprise the routine world of Washington national-security roundtable discussions. But debating Iraq with Lawrence Korb on July 20 at the Center for American Progress, he did just that. When his turn to speak came, Gelb fled the safety of the podium and stood and delivered his remarks Oprah-style, pacing around the room wireless microphone in hand.

The substance of his remarks, though, was less innovative. He sought to portray his ideas—centering on a three-way partition of Iraq—as hewing to a wise middle ground. “The Bush plan, to me, is a plan to lose slowly,” he said, while something like Korb’s plan for withdrawal “is really a plan to lose fast.”

When his turn came, Korb did something even more revolutionary than channeling Oprah: He conceded Gelb’s point. Advocates of a timeline for withdrawal like Korb have long insisted that a timetable could help stabilize Iraq by eliminating the irritant of occupation and giving the

Iraqi government newfound credibility as a genuinely sovereign agent. But to Korb, the merits of his plan had little to do with Iraq *per se*. Rather, accepting the lose-slowly versus lose-fast frame, he said that “staying in Iraq is going to make it clearer that you’re going to lose, and if

you lose slowly there, you’re also going to handicap your ability to win the global war on terror.”

A key premise of the withdrawal argument had been that anti-Americanism was the prime driver of strife in Iraq. The country could best be unified in the context of a U.S. exit—and sooner rather than later, before the cycle of violence generated a level of sectarian distrust that transcended Iraqi nationalism.

But that point now seems to have passed. Even Gelb’s partition alternative is less a plan to save the country than a plan to concede that Iraq is beyond saving. So in the late summer of 2006, when the world’s eyes turned to Lebanon even as the violence in Iraq reached new levels, the last opportunity to secure a decent outcome in Iraq has already passed, and nothing America can do at this point will change that.

“**G**OD WILLING, THERE WILL BE NO civil war in Iraq,” intoned Nouri al-Maliki, third prime minister of post-Saddam Iraq to conclude the July 25 joint press availability with President Bush. Importuning the divine is as good a plan as any at this point, for the substantive meeting itself was merely the capstone in a process that closed the door on the last best hope for the conventional policy process.

About a month before al-Maliki’s trip, the famously fractious congressional Democrats finally reached a reasonable degree of unity around a plan for Iraq—the Reed-Levin Amendment to the Department of Defense appropriations bill—that encapsulated the long-standing liberal argument that ruling out an open-ended military commitment was the best chance to avoid a downward spiral of sectarian violence.

The measure, announced June 16, attracted support not only from the more dovish Democrats but also from long-standing hawks like Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, and Ken Salazar. Oppo-



Desolation Row: And this is one of the nicer pictures of Iraq

nents included all Republicans, who characterized it as a “cut-and-run” strategy, four vulnerable Democrats primarily concerned with their political safety, and Joe Lieberman—who has essentially become a straight neoconservative on foreign policy matters. A final Democratic opponent—Minnesota’s Mark Dayton, an opponent of the initial invasion who’s retiring at year’s end—argued that a withdrawal plan was a good idea, but that it “must come from the Iraqi government.”

At the time, the Iraqi government seemed open to making just such a proposal. On June 14, al-Maliki told reporters in Baghdad that he was working on a national reconciliation plan that could include amnesty for those “who weren’t involved in the shedding of Iraqi blood” and included “talks with the armed men who opposed the political process and now want to turn back to political activity.”

The amnesty would, in other words, be extended to insurgents who had targeted *American* troops rather than Iraqi civilians. Such a proposal would likely be nec-

essary to get moderate Sunni insurgents to lay down their arms and begin coexisting peacefully with their Shiite and Kurdish neighbors. It would also, however, be plainly inconsistent with the continued presence in the country of a massive American troop deployment—it would hardly be safe for U.S. soldiers to operate in a context where attacking them was regarded as legitimate resistance activity by the government they were supposed to support. A June 24 *Newsweek* article based on a draft copy of the reconciliation plan indicated that it did, indeed, include “a timetable for withdrawal of occupation troops from Iraq” and that the “fiercest opposition” to the plan was “likely to come from Washington, which has opposed any talk of timetables.”

Unfortunately, when the final plan was released days later, it included neither amnesty nor a timetable. Congressional Democrats had launched opportunistic attacks on the former point, leading the administration to come out against amnesty as well. Bush’s views prevailed over al-Maliki’s initial instincts in both cases.

The opportunity thereby lost was enormous. On June 28, two days after the release of the revised, timetable-free reconciliation plan, the leaders of 11 insurgent groups announced that they were willing to halt all attacks immediately in exchange for a promise of American withdrawal within two years. But Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the offer with the repetition of long-standing administration cant that a timetable is “a signal to the enemies that all you have to do is just wait.” That a substantial bloc of America’s erstwhile enemies was prepared to *give up* in exchange for a timetable did not, apparently, enter into the picture.

THIS OPPORTUNITY, ONCE LOST, CAN probably never be regained. The level of violence in Iraq reached frighteningly large dimensions this spring with more than 100 Iraqi civilians killed per day in both April and May. This heightened domestic hatred has sharply reduced the odds that removal of foreign forces would bring about national reconciliation. A wave of retaliatory killings by Shiite mili-

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tias in early July even had some Sunni leaders reversing course and calling for *more* American troops to be deployed.

By then, events in Iraq had largely been obscured both in the press and in American policy circles by the growing violence in the Levant. But though less noticed, the situation in Mesopotamia had arguably grown worse. Asked at a Center for Strategic and International Studies press briefing to comment on the theory that the war in Lebanon augured the dawn of a third world war, Daniel Benjamin observed that “if you wanted to talk about a bigger problem with a potential to spread, then perhaps we should talk about Iraq” where “the level of order seems to be decreasing by the day.”

Bush came out of his meeting with al-Maliki not with a new plan for national reconciliation, but instead with a plan to shift several thousand troops into Baghdad in hopes of securing the capital. The plan has virtually no chance of succeeding. Brookings Institution analyst Kenneth Pollack—a *fan* of the strategy—estimated in congressional testimony that it would require 100,000 to 120,000 troops in Baghdad at a time when there are only 127,000 soldiers in the whole country.

But even if sufficient forces were available, the plan’s goal of combating Shiite militias and death squads in the capital seems unrealistic at this point. After all, the two largest militias—the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army—are affiliated with political parties represented in al-Maliki’s parliamentary coalition. While al-Maliki was en route to Washington, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the nation’s largest political party and overseers of the Badr Organization, was calling, in effect, for more militias, telling *The Washington Post* that the answer to Iraq’s security problems was the formation of neighborhood defense committees. Under the circumstances, a serious effort at a crackdown would simply leave the United States without meaningful allies in the country.

One way or another, the current trends toward sectarian violence and “soft” ethnic cleansing as Iraqis increasingly try to sort themselves into homogeneous neighborhoods is almost certain to continue. The main question remaining is how long American troops will be left in the crossfire. **TAP**

destination status (ADS). This is the Beijing tourism authorities’ equivalent of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval—or at least that is how they present it. Although more than 100 nations have now been granted ADS, the United States is not among them. As a practical matter, this means Chinese travel agents are not permitted to market the United States as a destination for group tours. Moreover, it is all but impossible for Chinese citizens to get a Chinese exit visa to the United States unless they can plausibly claim to be traveling on business, visiting relatives, or studying.

Until the late 1990s only nine destinations, notably Hong Kong and Macau, had been granted ADS. Then most of the rest of East Asia got the green light, including even Japan, with which China is supposed to be in some sort of cold war. In the last three years virtually every significant remaining tourist destination in the world has been approved, more than 50 since April 2005 alone.

WHAT HAS BEIJING AGAINST THE United States? The short answer is we don’t know. In fact, the Chinese authorities have not only refused to talk; they have been highly successful in covering up the entire situation. Misled by Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, most China watchers in the West assume that it is Washington, not Beijing, that wants to restrict Chinese travelers. Even *The Economist* magazine has propagated this misinformation. In an article on outward-bound Chinese tourism this June, its Hong Kong correspondent omitted all mention of the ADS system and blamed American restrictions for the fact that only “a handful” of Chinese citizens visit the United States.

The strangest thing about the ADS affair is that it seemed to have been resolved long ago. As far back as December 2004, Chinese and American officials signed a memorandum of understanding laying the groundwork for America’s ADS entry. Nothing more was heard, however, and it gradually became apparent by default that the deal had lapsed. Neither Washington nor Beijing will comment about why.

Some observers have suggested that

CHINA

INNOCENTS (NOT) ABROAD

China’s outbound tourism industry is booming—but not to America.

BY EAMONN FINGLETON

THE SIZE OF THE TRADE DEFICIT with China is one of the hottest potatoes in American economic policy these days. It is about to get a little hotter, thanks to Beijing’s highly provocative, if hitherto largely overlooked, controls on outbound tourism.

In theory the United States should be a major beneficiary—perhaps the major beneficiary—of a recent trend for Chinese tourists to travel abroad. In practice, however, the United States ranks low on the list of Chinese tourist destinations. On the most recent figures available, it received only one-quarter as many Chinese tourists as, for instance, Italy. Of the

49.4 million foreigners admitted to the United States in 2005 on all non-immigrant visas, nearly 300,000 came from China. By comparison 383,400 came from tiny Ireland and about 319,000 from Taiwan, countries that boast respectively 0.3 percent and 1.7 percent of mainland China’s population.

Clearly there are cultural and economic reasons for the differential. But it is Chinese regulation that most stymies America’s ability to generate invisible exports from Chinese tourism.

Before a nation is permitted to tap into China’s booming outbound tourist business, it must receive so-called approved

Beijing pulled the plug as a protest at the U.S. immigration service's post-9-11 policy of fingerprinting and photographing Chinese visitors. But this is transparently fatuous: The new American entry regulations apply equally to all aliens; there is no suggestion that the Chinese are being singled out. In any case the policy cannot have been a sticking point because it was already in force nearly a year before the tentative Sino-American ADS agreement was even announced.

Another suggestion is that Beijing objects to an American requirement that

system is to enable the Beijing regime to subject its citizens abroad to tight surveillance. Beijing insists that only a few trusted tour operators, both in China and in the host nations, be designated to handle Chinese tourists, and ADS administrators keep these operators on an extremely tight leash. Such an arrangement is, to say the least, difficult to square with U.S. antitrust law. After all from an American point of view, the business of looking after Chinese tourists on American soil should be open to competition in the usual way, not reserved for a few

yuan per traveler. At the current exchange rate, this is more than \$12,000, and of course its purchasing power in Chinese terms is far greater. For young people particularly this is a major stumbling block and it is clear that in most cases the only way to find the money is to borrow from relatives. (In a classic demonstration of Confucianism in action, relatives are evidently being required to assess each traveler's likelihood of return.)

Why is Beijing so concerned that everyone return? Clearly, this isn't about helping other nations crack down on illegal immigration. Beijing wants to stop potential dissidents escaping and making trouble for it from abroad.

Beijing is also concerned that Chinese tourists be looked after only by Chinese-speaking guides under its control. Why? There is little mystery: Because Beijing controls what the Chinese people are told at home, by extension it wants to control what they are told abroad. This is hardly a small point. What the Chinese think they know about the outside world is often a Potemkin village. Take the issue of the Falun Gong. If the Chinese media are to be believed, this "evil cult" is banned not only in China but also around the world. What a surprise therefore it would be for Chinese tour groups to learn that the Falun Gong's image in the West is a lot better than that of the Chinese Communist Party.

One thing is clear: The stakes are high for the United States. On the one hand, Washington cannot agree to the standard ADS terms without being accused of kowtowing to Beijing. On the other hand, Chinese tourists are rapidly becoming a significant major factor in the world travel industry. If the World Tourism Organization is to be believed, more than 100 million Chinese citizens will be vacationing abroad annually by 2020. And with a \$202 billion trade deficit with China last year, the U.S. can hardly afford to lose that business. **TAP**

Edmond Fingleton is the author of In Praise of Hard Industries: Why Manufacturing, Not the Information Economy, Is the Key to Future Prosperity (Houghton Mifflin, 1999).



My, Aren't the Skyscrapers ...: Oops. That's Paris. They can't come to New York.

each Chinese visa applicant appear in person at an American consulate. But this can't be a deal breaker, either. Visiting a consulate may be inconvenient and thus may discourage some tourist traffic, but if Chinese citizens are prepared to make the trip, why should the Beijing authorities stand in the way? According to some China apologists, the Beijing authorities are protesting the fact that the United States has too few consulates in China—just five to serve a nation of 1.3 billion people. But this surely puts the cart before the horse: There is not much point in opening more consulates if there is nothing for them to do.

The most likely explanation is Beijing's desire to control its citizens. An examination of deals made with other nations indicates that the whole point of the ADS

well-connected companies named in a bilateral agreement. It is equally clear that opening the Chinese tour business to free market competition would fatally compromise Beijing's control. After all, the essence of the ADS system is that Beijing offers a quid pro quo: The designated tour operators get to make good profits but in return risk losing their ADS license to print money if they fail in their obligation to keep Chinese visitors under essentially Orwellian control.

The major point of the ADS system's surveillance is to make sure that all tourists return to China. Indeed to make doubly sure, Beijing often requires travelers to put up huge cash deposits as a guarantee of their return. In the case of the tentative Sino-American tourism accord of 2004 the deposit was 100,000



THE TROUBLE WITH DIVERSITY

Two great liberal preoccupations—our celebration of cultural difference and the fight against inequality—go hand in hand, right? Wrong. Incredibly wrong.

BY WALTER BENN MICHAELS



“THE RICH ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU AND ME” IS a famous remark supposedly made by F. Scott Fitzgerald to Ernest Hemingway, although what made it famous—or at least made Hemingway famously repeat it—was not the remark itself but Hemingway’s reply: “Yes, they have more money.” In other words, to Hemingway, the rich really aren’t very different from you and me. Fitzgerald’s mistake, he thought, was that he mythologized or sentimentalized the rich, treating them as if they were a different kind of person instead of the same kind of person with more money. It was as if, according to Fitzgerald, what made rich people different was not what they *had*—their money—but what they *were*, “a special glamorous race.”

To Hemingway, this difference—between what people owned and what they were—seemed obvious. No one cares much about Robert Cohn’s money in *The Sun Also Rises*, but everybody feels the force of the fact that he’s a “race conscious ... little kike.” And whether or not it’s true that Fitzgerald sentimentalized the rich, it’s certainly true that he, like Hemingway, believed that the fundamental differences—the ones that really mattered—ran deeper than the question of how much money you had. That’s why in *The Great Gatsby*, the fact that Gatsby has made a great deal of money isn’t quite enough to win Daisy Buchanan back. Rich as he has become, he’s still “Mr. Nobody from Nowhere,” not Jay Gatsby but Jimmy Gatz. The change of name is what matters. One way to look at *The Great Gatsby* is as a story about a poor boy who makes good, which is to say, a poor boy who becomes rich—the so-called American Dream. But *Gatsby* is not really about someone who makes a lot of money; it is instead about someone who tries and fails to change who he is. Or, more precisely, it’s about someone who pretends to be something he’s not; it’s about Jimmy Gatz pretending to be Jay Gatsby. If, in the end, Daisy Buchanan is very different from Jimmy Gatz, it’s not because she’s rich and he isn’t but because Fitzgerald treats them as if they really do belong to different races, as if poor boys who made a lot of money were only “passing” as rich. “We’re all white here,” someone says, interrupting one of Tom Buchanan’s racist outbursts. Jimmy Gatz isn’t quite white enough.

What’s important about *The Great Gatsby*, then, is that it takes one kind of difference (the difference between the rich and the poor) and redescribes it as another kind of difference (the difference between the white and the not-so-white). To put the point more generally, books like *The Great Gatsby* (and there have been a great many of them) give us a vision of our society divided into races rather than into economic classes. And this vision has proven to be extraordinarily attractive. Indeed, it has survived even though what we used to think were the races have not. In the 1920s, racial science was in its heyday; now very few scientists believe that there are any such things as races. But many of those who are quick to remind us that there are no biological entities called races are even quicker to remind us that races have not disappeared; they should just

be understood as social entities instead. And these social entities have turned out to be remarkably tenacious, both in ways we know are bad and in ways we have come to think of as good. The bad ways involve racism, the inability or refusal to accept people who are different from us. The good ways involve just the opposite: embracing difference, celebrating what we have come to call diversity.

INDEED, IN THE UNITED STATES, THE COMMITMENT TO appreciating diversity emerged out of the struggle against racism, and the word diversity itself began to have the importance it does for us today in 1978 when, in *Bakke v. Board of Regents*, the Supreme Court ruled that taking into consideration the race of an applicant to the University of California (the medical school at UC Davis, in this case) was acceptable if it served “the interest of diversity.” The Court’s point here was significant. It was not asserting that preference in admissions could be given, say, to black people because they had previously been discriminated against. It was saying instead that universities had a legitimate interest in taking race into account in exactly the same way they had a legitimate interest in taking into account what part of the country an applicant came from or what his or her nonacademic interests were. They had, in other words, a legitimate interest in having a “diverse student body,” and racial diversity, like geographic diversity, could thus be an acceptable goal for an admissions policy.

Two things happened here. First, even though the concept of diversity was not originally connected with race (universities had long sought diverse student bodies without worrying about race at all), the two now came to be firmly associated. When universities publish their diversity statistics today, they’re not talking about how many kids come from Oregon. My university—the University of Illinois at Chicago—is ranked as one of the most diverse in the country, but well over half the students in it come from Chicago. What the rankings measure is the number of African Americans and Asian Americans and Latinos we have, not the number of Chicagoans.

And, second, even though the concept of diversity was introduced as a kind of end run around the historical problem of racism (the whole point was that you could argue for the desirability of a diverse student body without appealing to the history of discrimination against blacks and so without getting accused by people like Alan Bakke of reverse discrimination against whites), the commitment to diversity became deeply associated with the struggle against racism. Indeed, the goal of overcoming racism—of creating a “color-blind” society—was now reconceived as the goal of creating a diverse, that is, a color-conscious, society. Instead of trying to treat people as if their race didn’t matter, we would not only recognize but celebrate racial identity. Indeed, race has turned out to be a gateway drug for all kinds of identities, cultural, religious, sexual, even medical. To take what may seem like an extreme case, advocates for the dis-

abled now urge us to stop thinking of disability as a condition to be “cured” or “eliminated” and to start thinking of it instead on the model of race: We don’t think black people should want to stop being black; why do we assume the deaf want to hear?

Our commitment to diversity has thus redefined the opposition to discrimination as the appreciation (rather than the elimination) of difference. So with respect to race, the idea is not just that racism is a bad thing (which of course it is) but that race itself is a good thing.

And what makes it a good thing is that it’s not class. We love race—we love identity—because we don’t love class. We love thinking that the differences that divide us are not the differences between those of us who have money and those who don’t but are instead the differences between those of us who are black and those who are white or Asian or Latino or whatever. A world where some of us don’t have enough money is a world where the differences between us present a problem: the need to get rid of inequality or to justify it. A world where some of us are black and some of us are white—or bi-racial or Native American or transgendered—is a world where the differences

OUR CURRENT NOTION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY—TRUMPETED as the repudiation of racism and biological essentialism—in fact grew out of and perpetuates the very concepts it congratulates itself on having escaped. The American love affair with race—especially when you can dress race up as culture—has continued and even intensified. Almost everything we say about culture (that the significant differences between us are cultural, that such differences should be respected, that our cultural heritages should be perpetuated, that there’s a value in making sure that different cultures survive) seems to me mistaken. We must shift our focus from cultural diversity to economic equality to help alter the political terrain of contemporary American intellectual life.

In the last year, it has sometimes seemed as if this terrain might in fact be starting to change, and there has been what at least looks like the beginning of a new interest in the problem of economic inequality. Various newspapers have run series noticing the growth of inequality and the decline of class mobility; it turns out, for example, that the Gatsby-style American Dream—poor boy makes good, buys beautiful, beautiful shirts—

FOR 30 YEARS, WE’VE BEEN URGED TO RESPECT PEOPLE’S IDENTITIES— AS IF POVERTY WOULD BE SOLVED IF WE JUST APPRECIATED THE POOR.

between us present a solution: appreciating our diversity. So we like to talk about the differences we can appreciate, and we don’t like to talk about the ones we can’t. Indeed, we don’t even like to acknowledge that they exist. As survey after survey has shown, Americans are very reluctant to identify themselves as belonging to the lower class and even more reluctant to identify themselves as belonging to the upper class. The class we like is the middle class.

But the fact that we all like to think of ourselves as belonging to the same class doesn’t, of course, mean that we actually do belong to the same class. In reality, we obviously and increasingly don’t. “The last few decades,” as *The Economist* puts it, “have seen a huge increase in inequality in America.” The rich are different from you and me, and one of the ways they’re different is that they’re getting richer and we’re not. And while it’s not surprising that most of the rich and their apologists on the intellectual right are unperturbed by this development, it is at least a little surprising that the intellectual left has managed to remain almost equally unperturbed. Giving priority to issues like affirmative action and committing itself to the celebration of difference, the intellectual left has responded to the increase in economic inequality by insisting on the importance of cultural identity. So for 30 years, while the gap between the rich and the poor has grown larger, we’ve been urged to respect people’s identities—as if the problem of poverty would be solved if we just appreciated the poor. From the economic standpoint, however, what poor people want is not to contribute to diversity but to minimize their contribution to it—they want to stop being poor. Celebrating the diversity of American life has become the American left’s way of accepting their poverty, of accepting inequality.

now has a better chance of coming true in Sweden than it does in America, and as good a chance of coming true in western Europe (which is to say, not very good) as it does here. People have begun to notice also that the intensity of interest in the race of students in our universities has coincided with more or less complete indifference to their wealth. We’re getting to the point where there are more black people than poor people in elite universities (even though there are still precious few black people). And Hurricane Katrina—with its televised images of the people left to fend for themselves in a drowning New Orleans—provided both a reminder that there still are poor people in America and a vision of what the consequences of that poverty can be.

At the same time, however, the understanding of these issues has proven to be more a symptom of the problem than a diagnosis. In the *Class Matters* series in *The New York Times*, for example, the differences that mattered most turned out to be the ones between the rich and the really rich and between the old rich and the new rich. Indeed, at one point, the *Times* started treating class not as an issue to be addressed in addition to race but as itself a version of race, as if the rich and poor really were different races and so as if the occasional marriage between them were a kind of interracial marriage.

But classes are not like races and cultures, and treating them as if they were—different but equal—is one of our strategies for managing inequality rather than minimizing or eliminating it. White is not better than black, but rich is definitely better than poor. Poor people are an endangered species in elite universities not because the universities put quotas on them (as they did with Jews in the old days) and not even because they can’t afford to go to them (Harvard will lend you or even give you the money you

need to go there) but because they can't get into them. Hence the irrelevance of most of the proposed solutions to the systematic exclusion of poor people from elite universities, which involve ideas like increased financial aid for students who can't afford the high tuition, support systems for the few poor students who manage to end up there anyway, and, in general, an effort to increase the "cultural capital" of the poor. Today, says David Brooks, "the rich don't exploit the poor, they just out-compete them." And if out-competing people means tying their ankles together and loading them down with extra weight while hiring yourself the most expensive coaches and the best practice facilities, he's right. The entire U.S. school system, from pre-K up, is structured from the very start to enable the rich to out-compete the poor, which is to say, the race is fixed. And the kinds of solutions that might actually make a difference—financing every school district equally, abolishing private schools, making high-quality child care available to every family—are treated as if they were positively un-American.

BUT IT'S THE RESPONSE TO KATRINA THAT IS MOST illuminating for our purposes, especially the response from the left, not from the right. "Let's be honest," Cornel West told an audience at the Paul Robeson Student Center at Rutgers University, "we live in one of the bleakest moments in the history of black people in this nation." "Look at the Super Dome," he went on to say. "It's not a big move from the hull of the slave ship to the living hell of the Super Dome." This is what we might call the "George Bush doesn't care about black people" interpretation of the government's failed response to the catastrophe. But nobody doubts that George Bush cares about Condoleezza Rice, who is very much a black person and who is fond of pointing out that she's been black since birth. And there are, of course, lots of other black people—like Clarence Thomas and Thomas Sowell and Janice Rogers Brown and, at least once upon a time, Colin Powell—for whom George Bush almost certainly has warm feelings. But what American liberals want is for our conservatives to be racists. We want the black people George Bush cares about to be "some of my best friends are black" tokens. We want a fictional George Bush who doesn't care about black people rather than the George Bush we've actually got, one who doesn't care about poor people.

Although that's not quite the right way to put it. First because, for all I know, George Bush does care about poor people; at least he cares as much about poor people as anyone else does. What he doesn't care about—and what Bill Clinton, judging by his eight years in office, didn't much care about, and what John Kerry, judging from his presidential campaign, doesn't much care about, and what we on the so called left, judging by our willingness to accept Kerry as the alternative to Bush, don't care about either—is taking any steps to get them to stop being poor. We would much rather get rid of racism than get rid of poverty. And we would much rather celebrate cultural diversity than seek to establish economic equality.

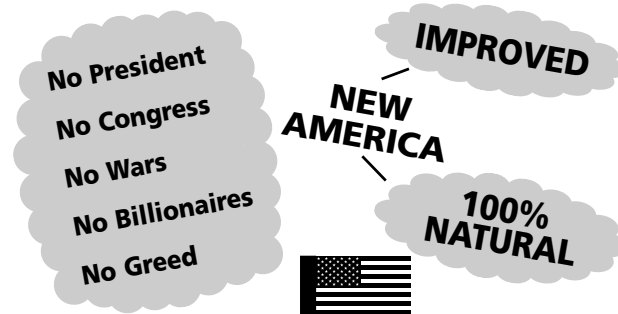
Indeed, diversity has become virtually a sacred concept in American life today. No one's really against it; people tend instead to differ only in their degrees of enthusiasm for it and their ingenuity in pursuing it. Microsoft, for example, is very ingen-

ious indeed. Almost every company has the standard racial and sexual "employee relations groups," just as every college has the standard student groups: African American, Black and Latino Brotherhood, Alliance of South Asians, Chinese Adopted Sibs (this one's pretty cutting-edge) and the standard GLBTQ (the Q is for *Questioning*) support center. But (as reported in a 2003 article in *Workforce Management*) Microsoft also includes groups for "single parents, dads, Singaporean, Malaysian, Hellenic, and Brazilian employees, and one for those with attention deficit disorder." And the same article goes on to quote Patricia Pope, CEO of a diversity management firm in Cincinnati, describing companies that "tackle other differences" like "diversity of birth order" and, most impressive of all, "diversity of thought." If it's a little hard to imagine the diversity of birth order workshops (all the oldest siblings trying to take care of each other, all the youngest competing to be the baby), it's harder still to imagine how the diversity of thought workshops go. What if the diversity of thought is about your sales plan? Are you supposed to reach agreement (but that would eliminate diversity) or celebrate disagreement (but that would eliminate the sales plan)?

AMONG THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC PROPONENTS OF diversity, needless to say, are the thousands of companies providing "diversity products," from diversity training (a \$10-billion-a-year industry) to diversity newsletters (I subscribe to *Diversity Inc.*, but there are dozens of them) to diversity rankings to diversity gifts and clothing—you can "show your support

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for multiculturalism” and “put an end to panty lines” with a “Diversity Rocks Classic Thong” (\$9.99). The “Show Me the Money Diversity Venture Capital Conference” says what needs to be said here. But it’s not all about the benjamins. There’s no money for the government in proclaiming Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (it used to be just a week, but the first President Bush upgraded it) or in Women’s History Month or National Disability Employment Awareness Month or Black History Month or American Indian Heritage Month. And there’s no money for the Asians, Indians, blacks, and women whose history gets honored.

In fact, the closest thing we have to a holiday that addresses economic inequality instead of identity is Labor Day, which is a product not of the multicultural cheerleading at the end of the 20th century but of the labor unrest at the end of the 19th. The union workers who took a day off to protest President Grover Cleveland’s deployment of 12,000 troops to break the Pullman strike weren’t campaigning to have their otherness respected. And when, in 1894, their day off was made official, the president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, looked forward not just to a “holiday” but to “the day for which the toilers in past centuries looked forward, when their rights and wrongs would be discussed.” The idea was not that they’d celebrate their history but that they’d figure out how to build a stronger labor movement and make the dream of economic justice a reality.

Obviously, it didn’t work out that way, either for labor (which is weaker than it’s ever been) or for Labor Day (which mainly marks the end of summer). You get bigger crowds, a lot livelier party and a much stronger sense of solidarity for Gay Pride Day. But Gay Pride Day isn’t about economic equality, and celebrating diversity shouldn’t be an acceptable alternative to seeking economic equality.

In an ideal universe we wouldn’t be celebrating diversity at all—we wouldn’t even be encouraging it—because in an ideal universe the question of who you wanted to sleep with would be a matter of concern only to you and to your loved (or unloved) ones. As would your skin color; some people might like it, some people might not, but it would have no political significance whatsoever. Diversity of skin color is something we should happily take for granted, the way we do diversity of hair color. No issue of social justice hangs on appreciating hair color diversity; no issue of social justice hangs on appreciating racial or cultural diversity.

If you’re worried about the growing economic inequality in American life, if you suspect that there may be something unjust as well as unpleasant in the spectacle of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, no cause is less worth supporting, no battles are less worth fighting, than the ones we fight for diversity. While some cultural conservatives may wish that everyone should be assimilated to their fantasy of one truly American culture, and while the supposed radicals of the “tenured left” continue to struggle for what they hope will finally become a truly inclusive multiculturalism, the really radical idea of redistributing wealth becomes almost literally unthinkable. In the early 1930s, Senator Huey Long of Louisiana proposed a law making it illegal for anyone to earn more than \$1 million a year and for anyone to inherit more than \$5 million. Imagine the response if—even suitably adjusted for inflation—any sen-

ator were to propose such a law today, cutting off incomes at, say, \$15 million a year and inheritances at \$75 million. It’s not just the numbers that wouldn’t fly; it’s the whole concept. Long’s proposal never became law, but it was popular and debated with some seriousness. Today, such a restriction would seem as outrageous and unnatural as interracial—not to mention gay—marriage would have seemed then. But we don’t need to purchase our progress in civil rights at the expense of a commitment to economic justice. More fundamentally still, we should not allow—or we should not continue to allow—the phantasm of respect for difference to take the place of that commitment to economic justice. Commitment to diversity is at best a distraction and at worst an essentially reactionary position that prevents us from putting equality at the center of the national agenda.

OUR IDENTITY IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT us. And yet, it is the thing we have become most committed to talking about. From the standpoint of a left politics, this is a profound mistake since what it means is that the political left—increasingly invested in the celebration of diversity and the redress of historical grievance—has converted itself into the accomplice rather than the opponent of the right. Diversity has become the left’s way of doing neoliberalism, and antiracism has become the left’s contribution to enhancing market efficiency. The old Socialist leader Eugene Debs used to be criticized for being unwilling to interest himself in any social reform that didn’t involve attacking economic inequality. The situation now is almost exactly the opposite; the left today obsessively interests itself in issues that have nothing to do with economic inequality.

And, not content with pretending that our real problem is cultural difference rather than economic difference, we have also started to treat economic difference as if it were cultural difference. So now we’re urged to be more respectful of poor people and to stop thinking of them as victims, since to treat them as victims is condescending—it denies them their “agency.” And if we can stop thinking of the poor as people who have too little money and start thinking of them instead as people who have too little respect, then it’s our attitude toward the poor, not their poverty, that becomes the problem to be solved, and we can focus our efforts of reform not on getting rid of classes but on getting rid of what we like to call classism. The trick, in other words, is to stop thinking of poverty as a disadvantage, and once you stop thinking of it as a disadvantage then, of course, you no longer need to worry about getting rid of it. More generally, the trick is to think of inequality as a consequence of our prejudices rather than as a consequence of our social system and thus to turn the project of creating a more egalitarian society into the project of getting people (ourselves and, especially, others) to stop being racist, sexist, classist homophobes. The starting point for a progressive politics should be to attack that trick. **TAP**

Walter Benn Michaels is a professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago. This essay is adapted from the introduction to his new book, The Trouble With Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality, being published in early October by Metropolitan Books.



ILLUSION AND REALITY

The violence in the Middle East shows the negative consequences of the administration's contempt for engagement. But the tough talk has failed.

BY FLYNT LEVERETT

ON THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, I WAS one of a small group of State Department staffers called in to confer with Secretary of State Colin Powell and work through the night to produce a diplomatic strategy for assembling an international coalition to destroy Osama bin Laden's base in Afghanistan. Powell took this strategy to the White House on the morning of September 12, and it became the blueprint for marshaling international support for Operation Enduring Freedom, launched months later.

In the weeks following 9-11, my colleagues and I at State developed a comprehensive diplomatic strategy to support the war on terrorism. This strategy envisioned, beyond a military campaign in Afghanistan, a sustained global effort to "wrap up" bin Laden's operational networks and affiliates in the Middle East and elsewhere. Iraq would continue to be contained. As other state sponsors of terrorism like Iran and Syria came to the United States to offer assistance against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, that help would be accepted; this tactical cooperation would then be used as a platform for persuading these states to terminate their own involvement with anti-Israeli terrorist groups in return for a positive strategic relationship with Washington. The United States would also develop a credible plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In March 2003, the invasion of Iraq clearly committed America to a very different strategy, aimed at creating what President Bush described as a "new Middle East." The main elements of this alternative strategy were diametrically opposed

to the strategy my colleagues and I had outlined a year and a half earlier. Now:

- Beyond Afghanistan, "rogue" regimes were to be uprooted, either by military force (as in Iraq) or through diplomatic isolation and political pressure (as the administration has tried with Iran and Syria). The United States would not offer "carrots" to such states to induce positive changes; diplomatic engagement would be limited to "sticks."

- Traditional "allies" like Egypt and Saudi Arabia were also to be fundamentally changed, through U.S.-mandated political transformation. Such transformation would bring a wider range of elites into these countries' decision making; these elites would be more focused on internal reform and grateful to the United States for their empowerment, which would improve the regional security environment.

- In White House meetings, I heard President Bush say confidently that democratization would even facilitate a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by shaping a Palestinian leadership more focused on internal governance (i.e., providing services such as collecting garbage) and less "hung up" on final-status issues like territory, settlements, and Jerusalem.

Three and a half years after the invasion of Iraq and five years after 9-11, the outbreak of armed conflict between Israel and radical groups in the Palestinian territories and Lebanon has revealed how badly the president's chosen Middle East strategy has damaged the interests of the United States and its allies in the region. The current conflict—which comes alongside a growing likeli-

hood of strategic failure in Iraq—shows the negative consequences of the administration's disdain for diplomatic engagement with problematic but pivotal players in the region. It is far from clear that the administration or, sadly, opposition Democrats will learn the right lessons from this episode. If they do not, the United States will likely suffer further damage to its position in the Middle East, with dangerous implications for America's ability to protect its interests and ensure the long-term security of Israel.

THE REALIST LEGACY

The basic flaw in the Bush administration's Middle East strategy is that it departs from the essential propositions of foreign-policy realism. In his days as the principal architect of American foreign policy under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger established a paradigm for U.S. grand strategy in the Middle East. In this paradigm, American policy should seek always to empower moderates and marginalize radicals. The best way to do this was through careful management of the region's balance of power, primarily through diplomatic means. The essence of such diplomacy is "carrots-and-sticks" engagement—credibly threatening negative consequences for regional actors who work against U.S. goals, but also promising strategically significant benefits in exchange for cooperation.

THE BUSH EXPERIMENT

The current Bush administration argues that 9-11 exposed the Middle Eastern "stability" provided by the realist paradigm as an illusion. The region's radicals—whether running "rogue" regimes or operating through non-state movements—were too threatening to be managed through diplomatic engagement and long-term political processes. And so-called "moderate" regimes in the Arab world, while they might cooperate with the United States militarily and strategically, indirectly encouraged radical forces by refusing to liberalize internally; in some cases, these regimes seemed to directly support radicals through internal security strategies that sought to buy off domestic opponents by quietly funding their activities abroad.

To address what it perceived as the shortcomings of realism, the Bush administration articulated its alternative approach to the Middle East. The conceptual discontinuities between the Bush approach and that of its predecessors make the record of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East in the five years since 9-11 as close to an "experiment" as one is likely to get in the indeterminate realm of strategic analysis. The results of this experiment so far have been devastating: Over the last five years, U.S. policy in the Middle East has emboldened radicals and weakened moderates.

The Middle East is today more unstable than at any point in

The Middle East is today more unstable than at any point in the post-Cold War period, and there is no evidence to suggest the rise of a more secure and prosperous future.

This paradigm guided U.S. policy in the Middle East throughout Kissinger's tenure in office and through subsequent administrations. At the height of the Cold War, for example, the realist paradigm guided American efforts across three administrations to draw Egypt out of its alliance with the Soviet Union and into a strategic partnership with the United States, which provided subsequent administrations a dramatically improved platform for projecting political influence and, when necessary, military power in the region. By taking Egypt out of the Arab-Israeli military equation through the U.S.-brokered Camp David accords in 1978, the realist paradigm also fundamentally strengthened Israel's security by rendering impossible a recurrence of a generalized Arab-Israeli war like those of 1948, 1967, and 1973. Similar logic animated America's ongoing strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia and, after the first Gulf War, the launch of a more comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace process at the 1991 Madrid conference. Although the Clinton administration's efforts to broker peace treaties between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and Syria in the late 1990s proved unsuccessful, the peace process nonetheless bolstered the American and Israeli positions in the region by establishing conceptual frameworks for an ultimate resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also provided a practical framework for keeping a lid on "hot spots" such as southern Lebanon and, as a result of Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation in the late 1990s, significantly reducing the incidence of anti-Israeli terrorism by groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

the post-Cold War period, and there is no evidence to suggest that this instability will give rise to a more secure and prosperous region in the future. Look at the trends: With regard to rogue regimes, Saddam may be gone, but Iraq has become a greater source of regional instability than it was during the last years of his rule. Iran's influence in the region is growing and the Iranian leadership is increasingly inclined to use that influence to threaten U.S. interests. Despite the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon last year, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad has actually strengthened its grip on power and bolstered its support for Hamas and Hezbollah. The administration's biggest success in taming a regional rogue—Libya's abandonment of its weapons of mass destruction programs and ties to terrorists—was achieved through traditional "carrots-and-sticks" engagement with the Quaddafi regime, an idiosyncratic exception to the broader pattern.

Regarding democratization, the administration's three examples of U.S.-engineered democratic empowerment in the region—Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon—are all basket cases. Hamas' electoral victory earlier this year has invalidated the administration's "garbage collection" model for lowering Palestinian national aspirations and encouraging Palestinian acceptance of final-status terms less demanding of Israel than those outlined by President Bill Clinton at the end of his tenure. There is no evidence that democracy reduces the incidence of terrorism, and ample evidence from places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia that holding more open elections in most Arab societies would pro-

duce governments that are more anti-American and less reformist than incumbent “authoritarians.”

THE CURRENT CRISIS

Seen against this backdrop, the current conflict represents a deliberate attempt by a loose coalition of some of the Middle East’s more problematic actors— Hamas, Hezbollah, the al-Assad regime in Damascus, and hard-line elements in the Iranian power structure—to re-radicalize the Arab-Israeli arena. The conflict began on June 25, when Hamas militants kidnapped an Israeli soldier from inside “Green Line” Israel. The operation—which was ordered by Hamas’ external branch, lead by Khalid Mishal in Damascus—grew out of a competition for influence within Hamas between Mishal and Ismail Haniya, leader of the Palestinian Authority’s Hamas government elected in January. Before the outbreak of violence, Haniya and other Hamas leaders in the territories had begun to explore ways to moderate the party’s posture toward Israel (an effort reflected in a recent op-ed by Haniya in *The Washington Post*). These efforts had no effect on official thinking in Israel or Washington, but they did prompt Mishal to initiate an anti-Israeli terrorist operation calculated to undermine Haniya and assert his own primacy.

By declining to provide avenues for engagement with the international community that might have been politically plausible for Haniya, the Bush administration left him vulnerable to pressure from more extreme competitors. Israel’s military response to Mishal’s provocation—including the arrest of Palestinian cabinet members—has further weakened Haniya’s position, but in ways not likely to help Israel in the long run. On July 10, two weeks into the conflict, Mishal gave a high-profile press conference in Damascus, at which he suggested that he, not Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas or Haniya, is the true leader of the Palestinian national movement.

Two days after Mishal’s press conference, Hezbollah conducted operations in the Sheb’a Farms area along the Israeli-Lebanese border that resulted in the deaths of eight Israeli soldiers and the kidnapping of another two. Hezbollah claimed that the operations were intended to obtain “bargaining chips” to swap for Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. In pre-9-11 days, the disposition of prisoners would have been handled through political channels—primarily, U.S. engagement with Syria and third-party engagement with Iran and Hezbollah itself. But with the Bush administration’s refusal to engage directly or indirectly with such “bad actors,” there were no operative political channels for dealing with the issue. And with the launching of Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, had an opening to link his group’s “resistance” activities with the Palestinian cause in a manner that has greatly enhanced his regional standing. Once Hezbollah struck, Israel had no choice but to respond militarily, even if the strategic logic of its response is highly dubious.

Neither Hamas’ external branch nor Hezbollah would have undertaken such provocative initiatives without approval from Syria and Iran. For al-Assad, the operations served to remind the United States and Israel that neither country could solve its security problems in the region without a strategic understanding with Syria. In the post-9-11 period, al-Assad has never been willing

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simply to accept the Bush administration's demands, insisting that U.S.-Syrian accommodation provide strategic gains to Damascus as well as Washington—effectively asking for a road map for normalizing Syria's relationship with the United States and its place in the region. As long as Washington gives al-Assad no incentive to cooperate, he will continue to work against U.S. interests.

In Iran, support for Hamas and Hezbollah's escalatory moves is a way for the most hard-line elements in the Islamic republic's power structure—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guard, which is closely linked to Ahmadinejad's Abadgaran political movement—to push back against Tehran's move toward multilateral nuclear talks including the United States. The reassertion of a more radical line in Iranian foreign policy is one of the most profoundly negative potential consequences of the Bush administration's refusal to pursue “carrots-and-sticks” engagement with Tehran during the last five years, even though it had opportunities to do so.



The Terrible Two: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad, August 2005

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has supported the move toward nuclear negotiations with the United States. While Khamenei is unquestionably conservative on many domestic issues, on foreign policy he is a traditional Persian nationalist prepared to think about Iran's national interests in pragmatic terms. During the tenure of reformist President Mohammed Khatami (1997-2005), Khamenei clearly worked against Khatami's efforts to liberalize Iranian society, but endorsed Khatami's many notable changes in the Islamic republic's foreign policy, such as an opening to Europe and rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states. In the aftermath of the 9-11 attacks, Khamenei approved Iranian cooperation with the United States, including a direct and authoritative diplomatic channel, to unseat the Taliban. Iranian diplomats who dealt with U.S. counterparts during this period indicated that there was interest in Tehran in using this cooperation to effect a broader opening to the United States. In 2003—when the Islamic republic was not yet spinning centrifuges and enriching uranium—Khamenei sought to initiate a diplomatic process aimed at resolv-

ing differences between the two nations. The Bush administration consistently refused to respond.

After Ahmadinejad took office last year, Khamenei took steps to limit the new president's influence on the nuclear issue and the broader question of relations with the United States. Ahmadinejad and his allies have been looking for a chance to reassert a harder line in Iran's foreign policy; the current escalation in the Arab-Israeli arena has given them that chance. Even if pragmatists are able to steer Iran into multilateral nuclear talks, the Bush administration's continued refusal to contemplate a U.S.-Iranian “grand bargain” means that the talks cannot succeed. And, as Iranian nuclear development proceeds, the quality of any deal that Washington might ultimately be able to negotiate with Tehran will continue to decline.

From the beginning of the current crisis, the Bush administration has clung to the increasingly discredited conceptual foundations of its approach to the Middle East. The president decided to stand back while Israel's military offensive against Hezbollah proceeded, hoping that, by weakening Hezbollah's military and political base in Lebanon, conditions would be established to bring about Hezbollah's disarmament and, by extension, deliver a blow to Iran and Syria. But it is evident that Israeli military action will not achieve these aims. Hezbollah is not some foreign entity, imposed on Lebanese society by puppet masters in Damascus and Tehran; it is a sectarian political and social movement with enormous popular support among Lebanese Shia, Lebanon's largest and most disenfranchised communal group. Disarming Hezbollah or moving it to the north would require the removal of the Shia population from southern Lebanon.

A RECOVERY STRATEGY

To repair the American position in the Middle East, the United States must reject the false premises of the Bush approach. The most dangerous illusion guiding recent U.S. policy toward the Middle East is that stability somehow “caused” 9-11.

Under current circumstances, a realist strategy for restoring American leadership in the Middle East would include at least five elements:

- The United States needs to widen its approach to defusing the current crisis to include direct engagement with both Syria and Iran. To facilitate a cease-fire and introduction of a multinational force in southern Lebanon, Washington should recognize that Hezbollah's disarmament would come about only as part of a broader political settlement in the region.
- The United States should convey its interest in a broader strategic dialogue with the al-Assad regime in Damascus, with the aim of re-establishing U.S.-Syrian cooperation on important regional issues and with the promise of significant strategic benefits for Syria clearly on the table.
- Washington should indicate its willingness to pursue a “grand bargain” with Iran, in which the Islamic republic would accept restraints on its nuclear activities and abandon its support for the terrorist activities of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah in return for U.S. commitments not to use force to change Iran's borders or form of government, to lift unilateral sanctions, and to normalize bilateral relations.

• The United States and key partners should articulate a more substantive vision for a two-state solution to the Palestinian question, including parameters for resolving key final-status issues that would meet the minimum requirements of both sides. This vision should incorporate the Saudi-initiated Arab League peace plan, which offers normalization of Arab states' relations with Israel to complement peace treaties that end Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Syrian territory.

• While the United States should engage moderate Arab partners more systematically on economic reform and human rights, Washington should drop its insistence on early resort to open electoral processes as a litmus test for "democratization."

How feasible is the pursuit of such a strategy? Although Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her team seem sporadically motivated to try to take policy in a more realist direction, their impact remains limited to tactical matters. It is highly unlikely that the administration will alter its basic strategic orientation.

This focuses attention on the role of Democrats as the nation's "loyal opposition" and whether the party can articulate a "return to realism" in U.S. foreign policy. The party has little to be proud of in the way it has discharged its role on foreign-policy issues. It has endorsed (or acquiesced to) all of the fundamental tenets of Bush's revisionist approach to the Middle East. Broad support for the Iraq War among congressional Democrats was intellectually legitimated by "experts" like Kenneth Pollack, who wrote a best-selling book using an analytically flawed assessment of the Iraqi WMD threat to argue that going to war against Saddam was the "conservative" option. Similarly, Democrats have not posed a significant challenge to the administration's emphasis on democratization in its strategy for the war on terrorism or its non-historical approach to the Palestinian issue.

Democrats have fallen into a "soft neconservatism" that has dulled the party's voice on foreign policy. Henry Kissinger once observed that the United States is the only country in which the term "realist" is used as a pejorative. The more progressive elements of the Democratic coalition have been especially strident in voicing their antipathy to Kissingerian realism. But it was the 20th century's greatest Democratic secretary of state, Dean Acheson, who defined a fundamentally realist paradigm for U.S. foreign policy in Europe during the Truman administration that laid the foundations for eventual peaceful victory in the Cold War. America needs that kind of wisdom about the Middle East today. It is time for Democrats to understand that, when it comes to curbing the threats posed by problematic states like Iran, encouraging reform in strategically important states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, or ensuring Israel's long-term future, realism has become the truly progressive position on foreign policy. **TAP**

***Flynt Leverett** is senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a visiting professor of political science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He served as senior director for Middle East affairs at the National Security Council and on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff during President Bush's first term. After leaving the Bush administration because of policy disagreements, he was a foreign-policy adviser to Senator John Kerry's presidential campaign.*

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Just a Gigolo



In the go-go '90s, **George Allen** sat on the board of a Virginia tech company. Now, the company faces several class-action suits and an SEC insiders probe.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

THE LATE 1990S WERE HEADY TIMES FOR TECHNOLOGY companies in Virginia. The future looked bright, and arguably nowhere more so than in Northern Virginia's new technology corridor, where boxy, smoked-glass structures filled with well-capitalized startups sprouted by the dozens along the highway leading from Washington, D.C., to Washington Dulles International Airport. While California had Silicon Valley and New York had Silicon Alley, Virginia's Fairfax County featured this stretch of buildings surrounded by dogwood trees and neatly clipped lawns—a place where, at the time, it did not seem far-fetched that people might one day want to buy Borg-like wearable computers with a little screen they could flip down in front of one eye that would allow them to work hands-free.

As Virginia's governor until early 1998, George Allen did his best to help promote the state's burgeoning technology sector, which was why his office sponsored a 15-day business-promotion trip in June 1997 through Germany, Denmark, the Nether-

lands, and Great Britain. Officials from the company that planned to one day sell those wearable, flip-screen computers—the futuristically named Xybernaut Corp.—came along in hopes of finding new business opportunities. Xybernaut had completed a successful initial public offering just a year earlier, and, by the end of the government-sponsored junket, Allen was able to announce that Xybernaut had licensed its technology to sbs Software Center in Germany to develop a hands-free unit in Europe.

"The support given to Xybernaut by the Commonwealth, and especially Governor Allen, has greatly aided the rapid consumption of both manufacturing and software capabilities that we believe will allow Xybernaut and its 'see-and-speak' technology to dominate the computer marketplace," Steven Newman, the company's executive vice president, declared in one of many optimistic press releases.

Even before leaving the governor's mansion, Allen made his ambitions to run for the United States Senate in 2000 plain. By spring of 1998, he was waxing enthusiastic about the prospect

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO

of seeking a Senate seat: The Senate, he told *The Washington Post*, is “the best board of directors in the world.”

And on August 11, 1998, he joined a real board of directors—Xybernaut’s—where he would serve until December 2000. Upon his nomination, he extolled the firm’s potential, crowing: “This is not science fiction—the future is here now!”

But today, as Allen runs for re-election to “the best board of directors in the world” and mulls a candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 with the encouragement of conservative insiders, who see him as the affable heir to George W. Bush, troubling questions have emerged about his tenure on the Xybernaut board—which didn’t turn out to be one of the best.

Little remains of the company except a pile of legal cases, federal investigations, and the faint imprints of furniture and footprints on the worn expanse of dark blue carpet at its long-time Fairfax offices, which have sat empty since early this year. (The remnants of the company, which employed more than 140 people at its peak but just 15 as of its last SEC filing, have moved to Chantilly, Virginia.)

Xybernaut filed for bankruptcy reorganization in July 2005, three months after an announcement by an audit committee of its board that an internal investigation—established that February at the urging of a whistle-blowing company insider—found that the firm’s chief executive officer and board chairman, former CIA agent Edward Newman, and his brother, president and chief operating officer Steven Newman, had “improperly used substantial company funds for personal expenses,” engaged in major unreported transactions, and hired family members whose roles with the company were not properly disclosed, in violation of its bylaws. Edward Newman’s attorney declined comment for this story, but Steven Newman predicted vindication in 2005 press reports. Unable to stand by its books in the wake of the audit committee’s revelations, Xybernaut in 2005 had to warn shareholders that its financial statements and disclosures dating to 2002 were unreliable.

By February 2005, the Securities and Exchange Commission had already launched an investigation into sales of Xybernaut stock by company insiders, including some officers, though no complaint has yet been filed. (An SEC spokesman declined to comment on the matter.) The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Virginia also reportedly opened an investigation into Xybernaut’s business activities in 2005, and shareholders filed multiple class-action lawsuits against the company and some of its officers and directors (those cases are now being consolidated in Virginia but are largely on hold until the resolution of the company’s bankruptcy case).

There’s no evidence that Allen did anything illegal, and he has not been named in any of the shareholder suits, which post-date his tenure on the board. Yet Xybernaut clearly engaged in questionable activities—and did plenty of business with questionable characters—while Allen was a director with a responsibility to

protect shareholders’ interests. Xybernaut’s rise, indeed, was driven by some of the financial industry’s seediest bottom-feeders—questionable stock touters, offshore front groups involved in money laundering, and foreign financiers linked to short-selling, securities fraud, and, in 2005, the collapse of a major Wall Street brokerage firm. Driving Xybernaut upward as well were the determined efforts of its officers to promote and sell the company’s stock to unwitting small investors, even as the company’s fundamentals spiraled ever more out of control. It became clear that no market for its products would emerge. And Allen’s affiliation with the company should now raise questions about whether he deserves to retain his other seat—the one on the best board of directors in the world.

WARNING SIGNS

Xybernaut’s problems date as far back as its debut as a publicly traded company. Founded as Consumer Products & Services in 1990, the company changed its name to Xybernaut less than a month before its July 18, 1996, initial public offering (IPO) after merging with a Delaware-based company of that name.

Signs of trouble were soon apparent. The brokerage company that underwrote Xybernaut’s IPO, Kensington Wells Inc., was targeted in a regulatory crackdown in 1997 and closed that year.

That firm’s top executives were eventually sent to prison, following a series of felony convictions surrounding three unrelated IPOs involving schemes to inflate the value of the firms’ stock and launder profits back to themselves through front groups based in the Caribbean. In 2001, prosecutors in the Eastern District of New York extended their investigation to include Kensington’s role in the Xybernaut IPO. Former Kensington Wells president Elias Tacher is serving a nearly five-year term in a minimum-security prison in South Florida.

The underwriting partner of Kensington Wells in the Xybernaut IPO, Long Island-based Royce Investment Group, encountered similar difficulties. Royce’s former chief executive and chairman, John Marciano, remains free on \$1.5 million bond and was in plea negotiations earlier this year with prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York on 15 counts of money laundering in a scheme involving Xybernaut stock. Royce has ceased operations. Marciano, who was working earlier this year at a Bentley car dealership on Long Island, has called the charges “baseless.” A trial is set for 2007.

No Xybernaut officers or past or present board members have been named in the IPO securities manipulation and money-laundering cases, but those company officers, directors, friends, and family members awarded stock in the IPO deal benefited from the manipulations of Royce and Kensington Wells. By creating an artificial demand for the stock, the market makers drove up the price. And the company gained substantial financing that the market otherwise might not have provided. The IPO raised more than \$13 million for the company.

Xybernaut’s rise was driven by some of the financial industry’s seediest bottom-feeders: questionable stock touters and offshore front groups.

Xybernaut officers should have been aware of Royce's reputation in financial circles when they chose it for their IPO in the mid-1990s, say industry insiders. "They're the bottom-of-the-barrel kind of firm," says Jacob Zamansky, a prominent securities fraud lawyer in New York. "When you're dealing with a Royce, you've got a very close personal relationship with a third-tier underwriter."

Xybernaut also saw some of its biggest boosters in the investment community nabbed by the long arm of legal and regulatory authorities years after their relationships with Xybernaut ended, in a kind of echo-boom of charges and cases that's blossomed from the boom-era activity. Two former touters of Xybernaut stock have since been accused by the SEC of fraudulent activities relating to publicly-traded securities, though not Xybernaut. Christina S. Kohlhaas of CSK Securities gave Xybernaut a "strong buy" recommendation and was granted stock by Xybernaut in 1996 (before Allen joined the board). In 2002, she, as Christina Skousen and CSK Securities Research, were enjoined from further securities violations without admitting guilt as settlement of an SEC complaint charging her with writing several "fraudulent research reports" between 1999 and 2002. Meanwhile, Mark Bergman, a director of investor relations at Xybernaut during Allen's board tenure, and a founder of financial public relations firm Access 1 Financial, was named in a 2002 SEC complaint as part of "a massive stock fraud in the NASDAQ Over-The-Counter securities market" for his work touting Environmental Solutions Inc., in what the SEC characterized as a stock "pump-and-dump" scam.

In early 2000, Bergman's Access 1 Financial had also given Xybernaut a "strong buy" recommendation, Howard Kurtz recounts in *The Fortune Tellers: Inside Wall Street's Game of Money, Media, and Manipulation*, and predicted the firm's stock price "would double within six months." Xybernaut boasted of the Access 1 "strong buy" recommendations in February, March, and April 2000. The stock zoomed more than 300 percent in value that year, peaking at \$29.97 on March 2, 2000. The firm neglected to mention that Bergman wrote his reports for companies that paid him, and not as a credible financial analyst.

Another promoter of the company's stock, the Donner Corp., ran afoul of professional licensers earlier this year. Later renamed National Capital Securities Inc., the Donner Corp., its president, Jeffrey L. Baclet, and research analyst Vincent Michael Uberti were charged by the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) with issuing 25 reports between March 1999 and May 2002 that "contained fraudulent, exaggerated and unwarranted statements, and failed to include critical information about

numerous companies' financial and business operations," according to an NASD release, and also for failing to disclose that Donner had been paid by 51 companies it was touting, including Xybernaut, to prepare positive statements. According to a 2006 NASD decision, two of the reports written by the company included a "speculative buy," issued October 12, 1999, and a "buy" recommendation, issued January 24, 2000, on Xybernaut (during Allen's tenure). The NASD ultimately expelled Donner from its ranks and barred Baclet and Uberti from participation in it.



No Market: Xybernaut sold fewer than 10,000 of its products, like this one shown in 2000, in 15 years.

Xybernaut also failed to pay employee withholding taxes in 2000, leading the Internal Revenue Service to file a lien against the company for \$1.13 million in back taxes in January 2004. Company president Steve Newman called the IRS complaint "absolutely without merit" that year.

Much of this mischief took place while Allen was on Xybernaut's board. Allen refused repeated requests to discuss his relationship to Xybernaut, but some experts believe that, at best, the board was asleep at the wheel. "It's possible that those sorts of things could have gone on without a board of directors knowing about it, but it's unlikely that a properly functioning board of directors would miss all of that," says David Skeel, a corporate law specialist at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and author of *Icarus in the Board Room: The Fundamental Flaws in Corporate America and Where They Came From*. "At some

point there are enough red flags that a properly functioning board of directors should have a sense that something is going wrong."

SELLING STOCK, NOT PRODUCT

There were still further signs of trouble in the years after Xybernaut went public. The company wound up selling so much more stock than mobile computing devices that it ultimately became a joke in the business press, derided for its stock "printing press." Its products never caught on, despite a marketing and advertising budget that grew to nearly \$9 million by 2000. Between its founding in 1990 and 2005, the company sold only 10,000 mobile computers, according to *The Washington Post*, while racking up losses of \$162 million, and issuing 200 million shares of stock. In September 1999—also during Allen's board tenure—the company's accounting firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, issued a dreaded "going concern" letter with a grim assessment of the company's financial health. (A going concern letter is how accountants officially express substantial doubt about a company's ability to continue in business.) But rather than heeding the warning, Xybernaut fired PricewaterhouseCoopers, replaced it with

Grant Thornton LLP, and ramped up the pace of its stock sales.

"As far as I knew they had gone down the right avenues and had gotten some good funding," says Christine Kallivokas, vice president of operations for the Northern Virginia Technology Council, which helped promote Xybernaut over the years. "We viewed them as a very strong growth company."

Starting in 2000, however, Xybernaut increasingly turned to a newly popular financial instrument to keep growing—and going: so-called PIPE deals, short for "private investments in public equity." In such deals, private investors are granted warrants or convertible debentures for stock at below-market rates in exchange for financing. All the investor has to do to make money is sell the stock. But some sleazy PIPE financiers go a step further by shorting the stock of the companies they finance, driving down share prices, diluting the shares of other investors, and even—in a particularly egregious form of illegal short selling known as the "death spiral finance scheme"—driving the company into bankruptcy through aggressive rounds of financing and short selling. Between March and November 2000, Xybernaut went from 1 percent to more than 15 percent owned by institutional investors who acquired their stock in the company through private deals, according to media reports.

"It really rode the Internet bubble, and it was real hot stuff," recalls Gregory Sichenzia, of Sichenzia Ross Friedman Ference LLP, a law firm that specializes in securities and PIPE transactions, which he described as an increasingly traditional financing mechanism. "It's not the fault of the financing that the company collapsed."

Several firms that financed Xybernaut during Allen's tenure on its board, however, have since been linked to a complicated international network of troubled financiers and brokers. For example, in April 1998, Balmore Funds SA and Liechtenstein-based Austost Anstalt Schaan signed a private placement deal with Xybernaut granting the firm up to \$11 million. One of their registrations of stock for sale came April 4, 2000—shortly after the March price peak and a period of unusually high volume trading, which was followed by yet another "going concern letter," in mid-March, and a decline in the stock price. The signatory for Austost Anstalt Schaan was Thomas Hackl, who was from 1991 to 2002 head of treasury at BAWAG, the fourth largest Austrian bank (itself somewhat controversial for losing millions in the financing of Yasir Arafat's casino outside Jericho). *TheStreet.com* has linked BAWAG to Austost and also to the hedge fund Alpha Capital Aktiengesellschaft, which invested in Xybernaut in 2001. Last year Hackl became a major figure in the collapse of Wall Street brokerage the Refco Corp., where he was executive vice president, in an accounting scandal that wiped out more than \$1 billion in shareholder value. Last fall, *Time* magazine also linked Austrian investor Thomas Badian—for whom an arrest warrant (ultimately dropped) was issued in the United States in 2003, and who has been accused of playing a role in the "death spirals" of a host of other companies—to Refco, through which he had been making some of his trades. Badian has been charged in the Southern District of New York with ordering the illegal short selling of the stock of software company Sedona by unknown offshore entities through his brokerage, Rhino Invest-

ments, in 2000 and 2001; Badian and Rhino agreed to pay civil penalties without admitting or denying the allegations. Badian has no apparent connection to Xybernaut. But a host of reporters and regulatory authorities are investigating the linkages between these brokers and funds—as well as sources of their capital—in the wake of the Refco collapse.

DUBIOUS CHARACTERS

Over the years, Balmore Funds and Austost Anstalt Schaan both invested in a surprisingly large number of the same companies, according to SEC records. In addition, former Xybernaut board member Phillip E. Pearce sat on the board of two of those other companies: Starbase, which drew financing from Balmore, and Imaging Diagnostic Systems Inc., of Plantation, Florida, which drew financing from both.

"What we know about finance is that's it about who your connections are," says Donald C. Langevoort, the Thomas Aquinas Professor of Law at Georgetown University, and a former special counsel to the SEC. "Normally when somebody with financial connections is brought onto the board, they are brought on for those connections, so the fact that they bring a book of business with them, that's what you get."

Other entities that financed Xybernaut during Allen's board tenure have since been charged with involvement in securities manipulation as well. David Sims signed Xybernaut's pipe deal with Forest Ave. LLC in the Cayman Islands; he was charged in 2003 with illegal short selling.

Despite the plethora of dubious characters surrounding Xyber-



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naut, the true identity of many of the company's financiers remains obscure. In the company's heyday, its officers claimed to have the support of major Wall Street firms, but that was more hype. What SEC records show instead is that during the company's 16-year history, it relied heavily on offshore firms for financing. And during Allen's board tenure, it received the vast bulk of its money from outfits based in the most notorious havens for tax cheats and money launderers: the Turks and Caicos, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, Liechtenstein, and Israel.

"Several of those things aren't necessarily indications of misbehavior, but cumulatively it doesn't look good," notes Skeel. Trial lawyer James W. "Wes" Christian has been fighting the network of offshore firms whose stock manipulations he alleges damaged Sedona and dozens of other firms. "In every company without exception that we represent, we found a rat," he says. "We found that the lawyers that these companies used were actually lawyers for the bad guys." And, he says, there was also usually an insider on the board of directors who helped make sure the manipulative deals went down. "These guys put someone on the board because it's a way to monitor things."

Whether Xybernaut knew what it was getting into when it sought out the offshore financiers remains unclear. The company approached Christian's legal team in 2005 about joining its network of fraud cases, he says, but the talks quickly fell apart in a disagreement over fees. What is clear about Xybernaut, Christian says, is this: "Their stock was manipulated both up and down to allow offshore companies, including hedge funds and financial investment funds, to make millions of dollars at the expense of poor innocent investors who paid for their shares with their hard-earned money that ultimately, because of such manipulation, became worthless."

ALLEN: A FINANCIAL GIGOLO?

Xybernaut was always clear about why its management wanted Allen on the board. He represented legitimacy and access. "George Allen, the former governor of Virginia and candidate for Senate in 2000, is on Xybernaut's board of directors and is very helpful in dealings with government," company CFO John Moynahan wrote to the Xybernaut Corp. Yahoo! Group, an investor forum, in 1999. Moynahan repeatedly touted Allen—"former governor of Virginia and candidate for U.S. Senate"—on the message board as one of the company's strengths. On November 8, 2000, the day after Allen won his Virginia Senate race, Moynahan informed the Yahoo! Group investors about his pending departure under Senate conflict-of-interest rules, saying, "While his contributions to the board will certainly be missed, I believe that our shareholders are better off with a staunch supporter of Xybernaut in the U.S. Senate."

There's no proof that Allen did anything for the company as senator. In addition, he never profited significantly from his board service. During his tenure on the board, Allen was granted 110,000 options of company stock that, at their peak, were worth \$1.5 million, but he never exercised those options, which expired 90 days after he left the board, and made almost no money from the stock, according to his communications director, John Reid.

But three things seem clear. First, he did benefit in indirect

ways from his association with the company: Allen's law firm did work for Xybernaut while he was on the board, and its officers contributed to his campaigns. While Allen was serving on the Xybernaut board, he was also a partner at the prestigious Richmond-based law firm McGuire Woods LLP. In 1998 and 1999, the firm billed \$315,925 to Xybernaut for legal work and was also granted 1,996 shares of stock in lieu of payment for services rendered. According to a disclosure form candidate Allen filed on May 12, 2000, he earned \$450,000 from McGuire Woods from January 1999 through April 2000. During much of that time, the firm was doing work for Xybernaut.

In addition, Xybernaut officers—four directors, an advisory board member, the comptroller, and an officer's wife—donated a total of \$10,750 to Friends of George Allen in 1999 and 2000. After Xybernaut retained McGuire Woods to handle its more current legal problems in May 2005, McGuire Woods staff donated \$32,500 to Friends of George Allen that very month—compared to \$31,625 during Allen's entire two-year 1999-2000 Senate campaign.

Second, Allen helped Xybernaut stay politically well-connected and in the good graces of the Virginia technology community—despite its increasingly questionable associations in the finance and investment world. On Election Day 2001, for example, losing Virginia Republican gubernatorial candidate Mark Earley chose to forgo the traditional Election Day rally or press conference in favor of a visit to Allen's former firm. Earley attended—and was photographed at—a demonstration of Xybernaut's technology at the company's Fairfax headquarters. Joining him were Allen, outgoing Virginia Governor James Gilmore III, Senator John Warner, and Congressman Frank Wolf, all Virginia Republicans.

That Election Day demo session must have made a particular impression on Gilmore, who went on to join the Xybernaut board. But by then the jig was up: "Xybernaut stays flat despite Gilmore aid," Tim Lemke reported in *The Washington Times*. "Even a former governor couldn't inject life into the stock price of Xybernaut Corp. last week."

But if he had, Gilmore would have filled the part that Allen played before him, which brings us to the third conclusion about Allen's relationship with Xybernaut. What sort of board was this—and what sort of director was he—to allow these shenanigans to go on while they were allegedly (as board directors are supposed to do) protecting the interests of the shareholders? Did Allen know that the company was selling far more stock than actual computer units? Was he aware of the reputations of the some of the firms that arranged financing? What did he know about the firing of PricewaterhouseCoopers after it had the audacity to tell the truth about the company's financial health? Did he privately express any concern about the company's actions? And how long did he continue to promote such an obviously shady operation?

During the Great Depression, the late Supreme Court Justice William Douglas coined the term "financial gigolo" to describe someone with a prominent name who serves on a board of directors in order to add a veneer of respectability to a questionable enterprise. It's a term of derision that could have found new meaning in dot-com boom era Virginia. **TAP**

The Rise of the Republicrats

Conservatives swore that they'd shrink the government once they got power. Well, they have it—and the government is bigger than ever. Now, some on the right have a surprising response: Embrace the welfare state.

BY EZRA KLEIN

TAKING ITS NAME FROM A SERIES OF ANTITYRANNY pamphlets published in the early 18th century, the libertarian Cato Institute is the foremost advocate for small-government principles in American life. Its 95 full-time employees, 70 adjunct scholars, 20 fellows, and army of interns work out of an eye-catching cube of glass and steel on Massachusetts Avenue and generated more than \$22.4 million in revenues in 2005. And while Cato's millions haven't been enough to elect *Atlas Shrugged's* John Galt president, they've at least made him heard: The media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting ranks Cato as the fourth most cited think tank in American media, racking up more citations than all its progressive competitors combined.

But despite its media presence—and, more importantly, despite six years of every branch of government being controlled by the putatively free-market GOP—all is not well within libertarian land. The state, even under George W. Bush and a Republican Congress, grows ever larger, the entitlement programs ever stronger. And so, in May 2006, Cato Unbound, the think tank's vibrant online journal, solicited essays asking whether “the GOP and limited government have a future together.” The lead respondent, conservative intellectual and former Bush speechwriter David Frum, delivered an answer unnerving to the anxious free-market apostles: No.

Frum is certainly no enemy of small-government conservatism, which, in his book *Dead Right*, he identified as one of two animating impulses for conservatives (the other being anti-communism). In his essay, however, Frum minced no words about small-government conservatism's record of failure. “Sometimes,” he wrote, “intellectual movements are called to life to save their countries at a time of challenge—and then gradually fade away as their work is done, as the Whigs faded away in the 1850s or the Progressives after the First World War. It may be that the future of conservatism is to recognize that it belongs to the past.” Today, Frum sighed, “[t]he state is growing again—and it is pre-programmed to carry on growing. Health spending will rise, pension spending will rise, and taxes will rise. ... [T]he day in which we could look to the GOP to have an affirmative small-government vision of its own has I think definitively passed.”

FRUM'S ESSAY IGNITED A FUROR ON CONSERVATIVE blogs. Dozens sought desperately to wriggle away from its dispiriting conclusion. Jon Henke, proprietor of the libertarian QandO, admitted that “on the question of the size of government, the Left has *indisputably* won.” Will Wilkinson, a Cato scholar and the managing editor of Cato Unbound, termed Frum's piece “depressingly convincing.”

I'd go a step farther and call it irresistible. Small-government conservatism *is* anachronistic, but not because of Newt Gingrich's failures. Rather, three longer-term factors have deprived the ideology of both intellectual legitimacy and popular support: structural changes in the GOP's coalition, accelerating economic insecurity, and the empirical failure of supply-side economics.

Of these factors, the first is the most noteworthy. Through its use of cultural and “values” issues—and, since September 11, security concerns—the Republican Party has captured the allegiance of working-class, socially conservative whites and seen its coalition's center of gravity shift from West to South. But recent research shows that these voters, whatever their views on gay marriage, are quite fond of the stability and protection of the entitlement state.

The dilemma for conservatism is obvious: How can a pro-business, pro-tax cut, and anti-entitlement creed such as today's conservatism cater to this constituency without abandoning everything it has believed for 40 years? For much of the old guard, such a radical re-imagining of conservatism may prove impossible. But some younger, less tradition-bound conservative thinkers are sketching out a pro-government philosophy that supports conventionally progressive proposals like wage subsidies and child-tax credits but places them in a new context—as rear-guard protective actions in defense of the nuclear family. That is, whereas progressives argue for economic justice for a class or classes, these conservatives are arguing for economic favoritism for families, buttressed by government policies that encourage and advantage them as the central structure of American life. It isn't hard to see the potential appeal of that approach, and it could corner Democrats and liberals into being the party of the poor, while the GOP becomes the party of parents.



EVIDENCE FOR THIS CHANGE IN THE REPUBLICAN COALITION came with the release of the 2005 Pew Typology Survey, a comprehensive polling project conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Pew's political typology studies, conducted in 1987, 1994, 1999, and 2005, sort the electorate into homogenous groups based on values, political beliefs, and party affiliation. The trends are telling: In 1987 and 1994, the Republican Party relied on two groups, Moralists and Enterprisers, the former emphasizing social conservatism, the latter small-government conservatism.

But the 1999 study noticed the emergence of a surprising third group: Populist Republicans. These are low-income and economically insecure Republicans who favor strong government regulation, entitlement aid, and moral enforcement; are largely centered in the South; and attend church regularly. By 2005, this group had solidified into Pro-Government Conservatives, and proven itself more than a momentary statistical artifact. Fully 80 percent of Pro-Government Conservatives believe the government must do more to help the needy, even if it means going into debt. More than 60 percent believe that environmental regulations are worth the cost, 83 percent fear the power corporations have amassed, and 66 percent believe government regulation is necessary to protect the public interest. Most tellingly, only 29 percent report that "paying the bills is not generally a problem," as opposed to 88 percent of the Social Conservatives (the updated name the study gave the Moralists) and Enterprisers. That

financial insecurity, more so than anything else, may explain their unwillingness to see the safety net shredded.

Scott Keeter, director of survey research at Pew, notes "this group really diverges from other [conservative] groups in how government should use its power." Nevertheless, in 2004, Pro-Government Conservatives remained in the Republican coalition, held there by social conservatism and, more importantly, national security. "When it came down to it," Keeter says, "people's economic anxieties were not as severe as their security anxieties."

But with the GOP's national security bona fides lying tattered in Iraq and the American people tiring of war, small-government conservatism represents a sort of ticking time bomb for the right. "If [national security] concerns recede or are replaced by concerns about the endless nature of the Iraq War," Keeter says, "then these individuals are available to the Democratic Party."

The Democrats may also gain from the shifting interests of a second group: Social Conservatives. While distinct for the typology's purposes, these voters share the Pro-Government Conservatives' beliefs about regulation and corporate power, with 88 percent fearing Big Business's influence and 58 percent agreeing that regulation is necessary to safeguard the public interest. And large majorities of both Pro-Government Conservatives and Social Conservatives support the government guaranteeing health care (even if it requires raising taxes), raising the minimum wage, and repealing either all or some of the Bush tax cuts. Many of these voters are recent recruits to the GOP, absorbed during the South-

ern realignment of the past 40 years, during which once-monolithic Democratic control of all levels of government has ceded to a reality in which more than 50 percent of state houses, 60 percent of governor's mansions, 90 percent of the South's senators, and more than 60 percent of their counterparts in the House.

Meanwhile, the traditionally Republican, libertarian interior West is trending blue. Ryan Sager, author of the forthcoming book *The Elephant in the Room*, has been tracking the cobalt creep. "In 2004," he writes, "Democrats took over both chambers of the Colorado legislature and sent the Democrat Ken Salazar to the U.S. Senate to replace a retiring Republican, Ben Nighthorse Campbell. ... That same year, Montana elected its first Democratic governor in two decades. ... Democrats won four out of five statewide offices in that election and also took control of Montana's house and senate. Counting Schweitzer, Democrats now hold the governorships of four of the eight states that make up the interior West; in 2000, they held none."

Sager, who got the researchers at Pew to break their polling data down by region, found that "the West was the least likely to believe that corporations were keeping you down or people don't have ultimate control over their own destiny. They stand out on all issues as more traditionally libertarian and self-reliant." Yet this Republican tilt is being overwhelmed by Hispanic immigration into the region and California exiles. These migrant populations have eroded the GOP's hold on this region, and as they wrest the West from the conservative coalition, the territory's libertarian pull on the Republican Party weakens.

AT THE SAME TIME THE ELECTORAL GROUND HAS SHIFTED beneath small-government conservatism, its intellectual and empirical foundations have collapsed. To some degree, this was predicted by the political scientists Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril in the 1960s. They found that the country is rhetorically conservative and operationally liberal, and so they foresaw that conservative rhetoric would prove potent in campaigns but suicidal in office, leading to a dysfunctional political system in which voters support candidates whose policies they would later reject.

The small-government movement's attempt to square that circle was supply-side economics—the argument that by cutting taxes the government would spur investment, grow the economy, and thus see an absolute increase in government revenues. But when Ronald Reagan tested the stratagem in office, deficits and not revenues skyrocketed, and inequality shot up. Still, tax cuts remained politically popular, and the small-government crowd devised the so-called "starve-the-beast" strategy—continue to fight for lower taxes while forcing spending cuts in order to balance the budget.

But a funny thing happened on the way to a small government: Government grew. William Niskanen, Cato's chairman, recently crunched the numbers. He found that over the period 1981 through 2000, "there was a strong *negative* correlation between the relative level of federal spending and tax revenues. ... [F]ederal spending increased by about one-half percent of GDP for each one percentage point decline in the relative level of federal tax revenues." When taxes are low, voters are happy to green light further spending. And because Congress can deficit spend, legislators focused on the next election—as opposed to the next

generation—found that they could have their cake and eat it, too. Is it any wonder the government grew fat?

In the states—49 of which are statutorily forced to balance their budgets—deficit spending wasn't an option. So small-government extremist Grover Norquist sought to starve the beast in a more direct manner, extracting antitax pledges from 1,200 of the nation's state office holders and targeting tax raisers for electoral execution. But, as reported in the March 2005 *Washington Monthly*, Norquist's strategy has begun to implode, with his former allies in the governors' mansions breaking their oaths. Mitch Daniels, Bush's first budget director, was the recipient of Norquist's 2002 "Hero of the American Taxpayer" award. Two years later, he became governor of Indiana, and proposed a 29 percent hike in the income tax for the highest bracket to close a \$600 million budget gap. Norquist raged against the betrayal, warning that "Governor Daniels [was] closing Indiana for business" and counseling Americans to "turn to people like [Texas] Governor Rick Perry ... for alternative solutions." Days later, Perry offered up a tax increase of his own. It had turned out that starving the beast sounded good to voters, but starving the schools didn't.

Speaking to Norquist, I glimpsed the pathological inflexibility aiding his movement's deterioration. After listening to his astute explanation of the challenges faced by an emergent philosophy, I asked whether, in this period of rising economic insecurity, stagnating middle-class incomes, and increased inequality, the conservative movement wouldn't need to evolve. Suddenly, the incisive analyst I'd been speaking to a moment before disappeared, and Norquist collapsed into a robotic recitation of conservative talking points. Asked about risk, he promised growth and "the guarantee that if you earn a dollar, you'll keep a dollar. A guarantee the left won't give you." But they will guarantee that if you lose a dollar, you won't lose your health care, and that's what the broadest swath of the electorate is actually worried about.

Jared Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, best summarized Norquist's bind: "There's no small-government solution for globalization. There's no small-government solution for force 5 hurricanes. There's no small-government solution to the health care crisis. There's no small-government solution to economic inequality."

BUT IF SMALL-GOVERNMENT CONSERVATISM LACKS SOLUTIONS, conservatives who want to keep controlling the government need to find some. And among the movement's intellectual elite, there are stirrings of a search for a somewhat pro-government outlook that counters the liberal prescriptions for economic justice and redistribution with a platform advantaging and protecting the traditional family from the forces that seek to rip it asunder. It's the putative pro-family goals of social conservatism transposed onto the economic realm, and, as Democrats have been telling us for years, they make a lot more sense there. The ideological argument over stay-at-home parenting, after all, is hardly worth having if the mortgage has already decided in favor of double shifts for both parents.

An early template came last November in *The Weekly Standard*, which featured an article by Ross Douhat and Reihan

Salam arguing that the GOP is “an increasingly working-class party, dependent for its power on supermajorities of the white working-class vote, and a party whose constituents are surprisingly comfortable with bad-but-popular liberal ideas like raising the minimum wage, expanding clumsy environmental regulations, or hiking taxes on the wealthy to fund a health-care entitlement.” They identified a new breed of “Sam’s Club Republicans” and urged GOP politicians to take the economic fears and anxieties of their constituents seriously. Doing so “would mean matching the culture-war rhetoric of family values with an economic policy that places the two-parent family ... at the heart of the GOP agenda.” They even admitted that such a program would “begin with the recognition of a frequent left-wing talking point—that over the past few decades, returns to capital have escalated while returns to labor have declined, and that the result has been increasing economic insecurity for members of the working and middle classes.”

Imagining a “virtuous cycle in which increased working-class economic security shores up familial stability,” Douthat and Salam suggest a policy platform that sounds more progressive than anything mainstream Democrats are willing to support: Subsidies to stay-at-home parents, pension rules that count child-rearing as labor, serious wage subsidies to low-income single men (who are currently frozen out of many welfare programs), and a tax code that does more to reward work than wealth.

Elsewhere, in the November 7, 2005, issue of *The National Review*, Ramesh Ponnuru offered a tax plan in the same spirit. Blast-ing the current tax code for “punish[ing] investment in children,” he proposed a replacement—a “pro-family” tax code that, among other things, triples the child tax credit while lowering the burden on households with children and raising it on those without. “Some conservatives,” Ponnuru frets, “will say this plan is too progressive.” Having read it, I have trouble seeing how. What Ponnuru actually fears is that some conservatives will notice the plan has a point beyond the relentless lowering of tax rates and shrinking of government—helping the traditional family survive the current economic moment. It’s conservatism with a pro-family, rather than antigovernment, goal.

A SHIFT TO A PRO-FAMILY ECONOMIC POLICY WOULD create a more intellectually coherent, and dangerous, opponent than progressivism has faced in decades—one that could obviate liberal claims to best represent the economic interests of the middle and working class.

Bernstein described a series of focus groups he attended where the apparently antigovernment conservatives in the room revealed a more complex critique of the state, complaining that “when Democrats are in charge, the poor rip the government off, and when Republicans control it, the rich do the thievery, and either way, middle-class folks are left holding the bag. They want a level playing field and the opportunity to achieve their goals.”

A shift to a pro-family economic policy could prove a dangerous foe, obviating liberal claims to represent the economic interests of working-class voters.

That’s a more dangerous sentiment than it may first appear. While the Democratic Party has lost elections, its economic vision has continued to triumph, ensuring the preservation of the entitlement state and the continuation of the government’s role as guarantor of the safety net. For all their caterwauling to the contrary, Republicans have in practice caved in to a basically progressive conception of the state, preferring instead to take their stands on culture and foreign policy.

Social conservatism, during this period, has acted on its own—a set of popular moral ideals with no corresponding economic vision. Were the ruin of small-government conservatism to yield to the emergence of pro-family economic conservatism, however, the traditional Democratic critique that moral values are a poor substitute for economic concerns would slam ineffectually into an ideology that fully agreed, and that had in fact united the two. What would be progressivism’s rejoinder?

Of course, the intellectual elegance of magazine articles and demographic data will have to face down the demands of big business, the bluster of ideologues, and the vagaries of American politics. As demographic analyst Ruy Teixeira points out, the GOP is not just an empty vessel awaiting the strongest possible ideology, but a collection of special interests and demanding constituencies out to get theirs. So wondering about a progressive change may be “somewhat far-fetched in light of how the current Republican Party is configured,” Teixeira says. “This coalition would have to be really convinced that they had no choice.”

As any Democrat knows, though, even a mild electoral loss can send a party into a deep spiral of self-loathing. If the 2006 elections and the 2008 presidential race don’t break well for the GOP, the search for answers will be on. But this isn’t about the next election, or even the election after that. Politics is more structural than commonly understood, and parties really see their agendas and directions shaped by the demands of the moment. If the electoral “market” exhibits untapped demand, a savvy politician or desperate party will move to capitalize.

In that way, politics is a game of follow the leader, and among the leaders in coming years will be rising health costs, stagnating wages, and rampant insecurity. The GOP will have to adapt to these realities or it will perish. As of now, their responses have been scattershot, like John McCain’s anticorporate populism or Mitt Romney’s universal health care plan. Eventually, the impulse for integration and coherence will overwhelm, and the isolated instances of Republican progressivism will be rolled into a whole that can be relabeled “conservative.”

For Democrats, being boxed in as the Party of the Poor while the GOP assumes the mantle of the family is an electoral nightmare. A conservative progressivism primarily for the middle class and discriminating against the underclass, while less just, will be politically potent, promising downscale whites all the benefits of redistribution without all the subsidization of urban blacks. Call it the rise of the Republicrats. Call it a disaster. **TAP**

THE UNACCOUNTABLES



Forget the soldiers: The 25,000 civilian contractors in Iraq are an occupying army unto themselves. Some may have engaged in torture—and, by evident design, they can't be prosecuted for their crimes. **BY TARA MCKELVEY**



ONE DECEMBER NIGHT IN 2003, ADEL L. Nakhla, a chunky, broad-shouldered Egyptian American interpreter with a soft, almost feminine voice, went to Cell 43 in Abu Ghraib's Tier 1A. He was accompanied by Army Specialist Charles A. Graner Jr., a reservist convicted in January 2005 of abusing prisoners at Abu

Ghraib, to the cell where a former Baath Party member, A.A. (his attorney asked that his name not be used for safety reasons) was lying on a mattress. A.A. had been classified as a "high-value target" because of suspected terrorist activities.

Officials had departed from custom when A.A. arrived at Abu Ghraib the month before and had not issued him an identification number. He was placed under the supervision of the OGA—an acronym that stands for Other Government Agency but in practice means the CIA. Officially, A.A. was a "ghost detainee"; he did not exist.

"Get up, you criminal. You're pretending to be asleep," A.A. later recalled the man he recognized as Nakhla saying. Then he asked A.A. to walk backwards toward him.

I spoke with A.A. in March during a trip to Amman, Jordan, arranged for him by his lawyer, Susan L. Burke, a Philadelphia attorney representing former detainees like A.A. In June 2004, she jointly filed a lawsuit with the Center for Constitutional Rights against Nakhla's former employer, Titan Corp., and another military contractor, CACI International Inc., which sent 60 employees to Iraq to work as interrogators between August 2003 and August 2005. A.A. told me he had been arrested on November 19, 2003, less than three weeks after going to a dinner party in Baghdad. It had been nearly eight months since the fall of Saddam Hussein, and troops had cordoned off an area of the city, known as the Green Zone, where A.A. had once worked as deputy to the general manager of the Military Industrialization Commission.

A dark-haired man with droopy eyes, A.A., 40, is funny, articulate, and arrogant. He also holds disturbing views. He was—and still is—openly supportive of Saddam Hussein, describing him over a cup of tea with me at the Regency Palace Hotel in Amman as an "idol for the Iraqi people." The night of the dinner party, A.A. recalled, he'd complained long and loud about the presence of American troops in Baghdad. One of the guests, the host later told A.A., was an informant for the U.S. military. A.A. said he had no ties to the insurgency and knew nothing about the attacks on American forces. Still, he was arrested and taken to Abu Ghraib.

That December evening in Abu Ghraib, A.A. said he encountered Nakhla, who had been sent to Iraq by Titan, which held a

\$369 million contract to supply civilian translators for the Army. (Titan, owned by L-3 Communications, recently extended the contract—now worth \$1.05 billion, according to Joe Walker, spokesman for the Army's Intelligence and Security Command.) A.A. says he recognizes Nakhla in the now-infamous Abu Ghraib photographs. That night, Nakhla told him to step on a platform in the doorway of the cell. He climbed up. His hands were shackled behind his back.

"You son of a bitch," Nakhla said, as A.A. recalled. "You move your legs from the surface." He took his feet off the platform and stepped into the air, hanging now by the arms that were handcuffed behind his back. This is known as a "Palestinian hanging," a form of torture reportedly once used by Israeli troops. A.A.'s friend, Manadel al-Jamadi, died in the same position in November 2003; a photograph of al-Jamadi, dead and packed in ice, was shown, along with other Abu Ghraib photos, on *60 Minutes II* on April 28, 2004.

As A.A. sat at a table at the hotel, he waved his hands to show how his feet moved when he dangled in the air. "I tried to put my hands out ... and to put my feet back on the bar, but Abu Hamid [as Nakhla was known by the prisoners] said, 'Don't,'" he recalled. "He was right behind me. I heard whistling in my head. I cried out to Abu Hamid for help. I told him, 'Abu Hamid, I am dying. Abu Hamid, I am going to die.' I hoped he would influence [Graner] for my sake because he is an Arab. But he was even worse than Graner.

"When Abu Hamid saw that I was going to put my feet back on the bar, he became very angry," he says. "He cursed. I started to sweat, and I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I was lying on the floor. I don't know who untied me or who put me on the floor. ... This was the last I saw of Abu Hamid and Graner."

ON MAY 7, 2004, SHORTLY AFTER THE ABU GHRAIB scandal broke, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Brownlee said they would make sure individuals "responsible for the shameful and illegal acts of abuse are held accountable." Eighty-nine members of the U.S. military have been prosecuted for detainee-related misconduct since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom. And recent reports of rape, murder, and other crimes in Haditha, Mahmudiya, and other Iraqi towns indicate that some soldiers responsible for such acts will be held accountable.

Not so for independent contractors like Nakhla, who has been implicated in charges of rape, torture, and assault during his one-year stint in Iraq. He is one of 25,000 civilian contractors who have

worked for the military in Iraq since hostilities began. Currently, more than 15 contractors are under Justice Department investigations. While that number may seem small set against 25,000, many observers say instances of contractor abuse are vastly underreported by victims—and underinvestigated by the military. Only one civilian, David A. Passaro, a CIA contract interrogator, has been indicted—for assault on detainee Abdul Wali, who died in June 2003. Passaro's trial opened on August 7.

These cases are moving forward at a snail's pace. That's partly because it's not clear which laws can be applied to a nonmilitary person who commits a crime on foreign soil. In legal terms, this means untangling a web of justice that no one—not the administration, military, the public, and certainly not the contractors with powerful government ties—seems intent on untangling. In practical terms, it may mean that American employees, working alongside the U.S. military and on their payroll, committed crimes in Iraq for which they will never be punished.

Contracts with companies that provide civilian support to the military are awarded through a formal process. First, notifications of requests for proposals appear in publications like *Defense Daily* and government officers put the word out

translators. And that's where things seem to have gone awry. Titan (as BTRG, Inc.) had been supplying linguists to the Army at least since 1999. But suddenly the Army needed more than 4,000 interpreters in Iraq. To meet the higher demand, Titan recruiters paid for newspaper and TV ads in Detroit, San Diego, and other cities looking for Arabic-English speakers who were willing to go to a war zone.

Those weren't easy jobs to fill. Among those hired were former construction workers, computer technicians, security guards, and assembly-line workers. "I saw people who cannot spell Bob. B-O-B," says Walid Hanna, an Iraq-born executive director of Michigan Community Financial Services in Sterling Heights, Michigan, and a former interpreter in Iraq. "I saw translators who didn't even understand English." Abdullah Khalil, a former truck driver in Vienna, Virginia, who worked for Titan in 2003, recalls meeting local hires in Iraq. "They would see someone riding a donkey, and they make him a translator," Khalil says. "The only thing he knows how to do is ride a donkey."

"They didn't take any caution in who they hired," says attorney Burke. Many of the interpreters seemed ill-suited for their jobs. In some cases, she says, they ended up treating the de-

"They would see someone riding a donkey, and they make him a translator," says one interpreter. "I saw people who cannot spell Bob. B-O-B," says another.

among colleagues. It's a small world. Many contractors spend years in the military before joining the private sector. Titan Executive Vice President of Operations Lawrence J. Delaney is a former assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, for example, and three other Titan executives have served as officers or in high-ranking military positions. Contractors present a formal bid, and government chooses the best offer.

The military says that relying on temporary workers rather than enlisted troops for support services allows for a more cost-effective military. Over the years, the number of private contractors has increased steadily. The United States deployed roughly one contractor for every 50 military personnel during the 1991 Gulf War. In Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo, the ratio was about 1 to 10. That is the ratio in Iraq as well. For years, lawmakers and taxpayer groups have raised questions about the system, but there has never been a concerted effort to overhaul it. Things have bumped along with no major disasters.

With Iraq, however, the competitive nature of the contracting process broke down. "Government contracting officers were under tremendous pressure to meet multiple demands in a tightly compressed time frame," said Larry Allen, executive vice president of a nonprofit association of government-contract companies, Coalition for Government Procurement, at a September 2004 Senate Democratic Policy Committee hearing. "[Government contracting officers] turned to companies with which they had existing contracts and which had well-established reputations." It was an ad-hoc approach, say critics, and hardly an efficient method of streamlining wartime expenses.

From there, the race was on for Titan to provide enough

tainees in a horrific manner. The complaints in the lawsuit, as Judge James Robertson of Federal District Court in the District of Columbia writes in his June 29 opinion, include "allegations of nearly unspeakable acts of torture and other mistreatment by interpreters and interrogators."

A lawyer representing CACI, John F. O'Connor, says in a statement posted on the company Web site that the lawsuit tries "to twist and invent facts in an attempt to dictate the United States' policies in Iraq, and to defame and extort financial compensation from CACI." Titan spokesman Evan Goetz refused to comment about the lawsuit but said the company would "vigorously defend against allegations that Titan committed any wrongdoing."

Burke says slipshod hiring practices and training contributed to the mistreatment of detainees. After interpreters were hired, they say they didn't get much guidance. Former Titan employee Khalil, for example, says he spent a short time on military bases, learning about "insects, bombings, and ambushes" before going to the Middle East. Nobody, he says, told him how to be an interpreter or how detainees should be treated, or about international law and human rights. In the August 2004 Fay-Jones report on Abu Ghraib, Major General George R. Fay wrote: "The contracting system failed to ensure that properly trained and vetted linguist and interrogator personnel were hired to support operations at Abu Ghraib."

In addition, Khalil says, some interpreters arrived in Iraq with a bias. Titan recruiters hired individuals "known to be full of hatred and violent animus towards Iraqis in the custody of the United States," according to Burke's lawsuit. Many interpreters were Kurds, Iraqi Christians, or other members of minorities that

had been oppressed in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. "The Kurdish people hate the Baath people," Khalil explains. "If somebody has a hatred before, and he goes to Iraq and captures Saddam's people and he tries to abuse them—he asks an Army commander, 'Should I do yelling on this guy?' If [the commander] gives him an OK, he does it."

In other cases, interpreters may have taken the initiative to expand their responsibilities. "Maybe it was *ultra vires*—that's Latin for 'too big for your britches,'" says Graner's former attorney, Guy L. Womack. T.A., a former Abu Ghraib prisoner I met in Amman, described an interpreter who seemed to fit that description. (The dates of T.A.'s detention were confirmed by a military spokesman.) T.A. says, "When I asked why I was brought there" the translator—a Lebanese American employed by Titan—replied "You're part of the resistance." Two months after T.A.'s arrival, the same interpreter appeared with documents showing why he was imprisoned. Two of the pages, however, were blank. "I said, 'I haven't been accused of anything,'" says T.A., who was 16 at the time. The interpreter snatched the papers, filled them out, and gave them back. He had written down that T.A. was accused of shooting a rocket-propelled grenade at coalition forces.

AT THE TIME OF T.A.'S DETENTION in the fall of 2003, American casualties were mounting. Pressure on military commanders to extract information from detainees was intense. Some legal experts think contractors may have been hired to assist with harsh interrogation techniques specifically because they were not subject to the same legal standards as military personnel. In addition, some of these experts think that the decision to use contractors goes right to the top. "It's very, very clear that the Office of the Secretary of Defense thought it would be very advantageous to bring people into the intelligence-gathering process—a contractor—who is outside the chain of command," says Scott Horton, who has served as chairman of the human-rights committee of the City Bar Association in New York. "One of the things they had was a back-door form of communications with the DoD." Three soldiers who were at Abu Ghraib, says Horton, told him Defense Department officials spoke directly with interrogators through secured telephone lines—ostensibly to provide "logistical support." In fact, says Horton, "They were involved in intelligence gathering."

Specialist Samuel J. Provance III, a systems administrator stationed at Abu Ghraib, says a group of interrogators temporarily took over a room, the Top Secret Controlled Intelligence Facility, in the fall of 2003 with direct linkups to U.S. military bases. "I'd walk in the room and they'd get really quiet," he says.

At a recent court-martial of an Army dog handler, Sergeant Santos A. Cardona, civilian interrogator Steven J. Pescatori, and an officer, Major Michael Thompson, indicated that Rumsfeld had a

keen personal interest in interrogations. "Thompson was frequently told by Pappas' executive assistant that 'Mr. Donald Rumsfeld and Mr. Paul Wolfowitz' had called and were 'waiting for reports,'" says Hina Shamsi, a Human Rights First senior counsel who attended the Fort Meade, Maryland, trial. Pescatori, she says, "recalled being told by military intelligence personnel that Secretary Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz received 'nightly briefings.'"

Attorney Horton's concerns about civilian contractors are based on an unfortunate reality: It is immensely difficult to prosecute contractors for criminal misconduct, including the mistreatment of detainees. As civilians, contractors aren't bound by military law. Contractors accused of a crime in the United States are tried in a criminal court in this country. But if the crime is committed overseas, U.S. courts no longer have jurisdiction, with rare exceptions, so contractors are tried in the country where the offenses occurred.

In Iraq, however, they are not prosecuted. Guidelines set up by the 2003 Coalition Provisional Authority, a temporary governing body of Iraq, shielded contractors and troops from being tried in local courts.

Contractors can, theoretically, be held liable under federal laws like the 2000 Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act, according to Charles A. Allen, a deputy general counsel of international affairs in the Defense Department. This law allows prosecutors to go after Americans who have committed crimes on overseas military bases, but it can be used only in certain

types of cases. So far, it has been applied just once.

The question of contractor accountability seems to confound even those in charge of the military. At a December 2005 presentation at Johns Hopkins University, Rumsfeld gave a rambling answer, citing U.S. and Iraqi law and the United Nations as governing contractors' "behavior" in Iraq when asked the question by Johns Hopkins graduate student Kate (Turner) Bateman. Five months later, Bush responded to the question (asked again by Bateman) by saying "Help," before adding that he'd ask Rumsfeld. "I don't mean to be dodging the question," the president said, "although it's kind of convenient in this case."

As a result, contractors fall into a legal lacuna. John Sifton, a Human Rights Watch senior researcher who's met with Justice Department officials about civilian contractors under investigation, says he doesn't think much has been done on the cases. "Maybe they're about to indict everybody tomorrow, but I doubt it," says Sifton. "My feeling is they're just running up the clock and nothing will ever happen."

"Not one private military contractor has been prosecuted or punished for a crime in Iraq," writes P.W. Singer in *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 2005), though more than 25,000 contractors work there. "Either every one of them happens to be a model citizen, or there are serious shortcomings in the legal system that governs them."



TODAY, NAKHLA, WHO EMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES in 1979, according to a court filing, lives in suburban Maryland with his wife and two daughters. He works as a lab technician at an eyeglasses store in a shopping mall. “He’s a very good employee,” says Nicole Bost, a store manager. From 1998 to 1999, Nakhla worked at a business communications company in suburban Virginia. “He was one of the nicest guys who’s ever worked here,” says Don Eckrod, a company vice president. “He’s a big guy, size-wise. Just a lovable-bear kind of a guy. Almost too nice.”

On the street where Nakhla has lived since 1989, a different picture emerges. One neighbor, an art director, says there’s been “some real shouting matches” between him and another man on the block. Another neighbor, a preschool teaching assistant, still has “a nutcase, rambling letter, telling me how horrible my children are,” she says, which Nakhla wrote her 11 years ago. Afterward, she called the police. Another time, she watched Nakhla kick her Glad trash bag across the yard to move it to another spot. The expression on his face, she says, “was like, ‘Oh, I hate this.’ Oh, my gosh. Anger, just anger.”

Then the Abu Ghraib scandal happened. “Were we surprised? Oh, no. I called my husband at work and said, ‘We are not the only ones who think this guy is a big, fat bully.’”

Nakhla applied for his job with Titan in the spring of 2003. “Fluent in Arabic from his childhood in Egypt, he was offered and accepted a one-year assignment,” according to the court filings. Once in Iraq, Nakhla was accused of various misdeeds. In the Fay-Jones report, Lieutenant General Anthony R. Jones and Fay cite a Titan employee identified as “Civilian-17” who, based on the physical description, is widely believed to be Nakhla and is accused of cutting a detainee’s ear “to an extent that required stitches.”

In an October 2003 photo, Nakhla, or Abu Hamid, as he was known by detainees, is standing near three naked male prisoners shackled together, lying on the floor. Nakhla is crouched next to the prisoners. In another photo, he is putting his hand near a detainee’s neck, and, in a third, sitting in a white plastic chair near three naked detainees lying on the floor. Nakhla watched as, he said, soldiers “handcuffed [detainees’] hands together and their legs with shackles and started to stack them on top of each other,” according to the well-known report on military abuse completed by Major General Antonio Taguba.

In a January 18, 2004, statement in the Taguba report, detainee Kasim Mehaddi Hilas said he saw Nakhla sexually assault an Iraqi boy. Nakhla was “fucking a kid,” said Hilas. “His age would be about 15 to 18 years. The kid was hurting very bad and they covered all the doors with sheets. Then when I heard the screaming I climbed the door because on top it wasn’t covered and I saw Abu Hamid who was wearing the military uniform, putting his dick in the little kid’s ass ... And the female soldier was taking pictures.”

Tabuga said he found the accounts “credible based on the clarity of their statements and supporting evidence provided by other witnesses.” He names Nakhla as a suspect in detainee abuse. But so far Nakhla has not been charged with any crime.

In July 2004, a U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID) memo, released under the Freedom of Information Act,

said Nakhla could be charged with aggravated sexual abuse. If he had been prosecuted, he could have been tried in a criminal court under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act—most likely in the Eastern District of Virginia, where his case has apparently been investigated by the U.S. Attorney’s office. But the investigation seems to be at a standstill.

A May *Legal Times* article by Jason McLure says the allegations against Nakhla have not stood up to scrutiny by the Department of Justice, and that prosecutors haven’t been able to gather reliable evidence against him. The article cites one, unnamed government lawyer. It’s not clear—at least to two other attorneys who are familiar with Justice Department procedures—whether the evidence against Nakhla is not panning out or whether the case is just not being aggressively pursued. Nakhla, his lawyer, and a spokeswoman in the U.S. Attorney’s office all refused to comment.

Meanwhile, civil claims against Nakhla were dismissed in June because he doesn’t live in the District of Columbia, where the case is being heard. Burke has asked Judge Robertson to reconsider his ruling on Nakhla, but even getting the case heard will be difficult. Robertson has dismissed many of the claims against Titan and CACI, including allegations that they were involved in a racketeering scheme. He has, however, allowed some claims against the contractors, including sexual assault and battery, to remain and has agreed to let the case go forward in a limited manner.

WHILE NAKHLA AND GRANER WERE STATIONED AT Abu Ghraib in 2003, the prospect of Americans being hauled into an Iraqi court seemed unimaginable—because of the CPA guidelines, but also because the situation in Iraq was far less desperate. The political climate has shifted in both Iraq and the United States over the past three years. Many of the Iraqis who’d once welcomed U.S. troops and cheered the downfall of Saddam Hussein have become—to put it mildly—resentful of the American presence.

Other things have changed, too. The November killing of 24 people in Haditha and the rape and murder of a teenage Iraqi girl and her family members in Mahmudiya in March have enraged Iraqis. “We believe that the immunity given to members of coalition forces encouraged them to commit such crimes in cold blood,” Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki told journalists in July. “That makes it necessary to review it.”

The U.S. military justice system is dealing with many of the wrongdoers, and in some ways impressively. More than 250 officers and soldiers have been held accountable for mistreating detainees, says Army spokesman Major Wayne Marotto. Some, like Graner, are behind bars. Yet the legal process for contractors is deeply flawed. None of the civilian workers from Abu Ghraib have even been put on trial.

These days, Nakhla drives to work in a battered Toyota with a cross hanging from the rear-view window. On a May afternoon, he ambled through the shopping mall during a break from work and picked up a pizza. Nakhla has not had to answer questions from prosecutors about what he did—or didn’t do—on the night shift at Abu Ghraib. As it looks now, he may never have to explain what happened. “It’s certainly fair to say he hasn’t been brought to justice,” says attorney Burke. “For him, it’s over.” **TAP**

Culture & Books

"The idea ... that religion is the driving force of the administration's policies and the leading threat to American democracy is misplaced."

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TELEVISION

OUT-FOXED, FINALLY?

Good news—FOX News Channel's ratings are down across the board! But what's happening to them now could one day happen to our side.

BY PAUL WALDMAN

WHEN THE NIELSEN RATINGS for the second quarter of 2006 came in, FOX News Channel got some bad news. The network's entire weekday lineup—every show—had lost viewers from the first quarter of the year. *Special Report with Brit Hume*, down 19 percent. *The Big Story with John Gibson*, down 13 percent. *The O'Reilly Factor*, down 8 percent. And in nearly every case, the drop in ratings was even more severe among what television insiders call "the demographic"—viewers between ages 25 and 54.

If we look beyond quarters and compare this year to last year, things look just

as bad. While both CNN and MSNBC's ratings were up from June 2005 to June 2006, FOX's overall ratings fell 13 percent (and by 22 percent among the 25 to 54 demographic). In contrast, the one cable show hosted by a progressive, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, while still trailing some of its conservative competitors, experienced a 30 percent growth in the last quarter in the 25 to 54 demographic. And as *The New York Times* recently reported, the median age of Olbermann's viewers is a sprightly 59, compared to O'Reilly's 71.

Conservatives on the other networks are not exactly setting the cable world on fire, either. The latest right-wing talker to

be given his own cable show, Glenn Beck, averaged a paltry 165,000 viewers for CNN's Headline News in his first two months on the air. After watching *The Situation With Tucker Carlson* float in the ratings toilet for the first year of its existence, MSNBC execs recently decided to overhaul the show, now named simply *Tucker* (presumably on the theory that what the program needed was more Tucker).

Do these numbers portend the decline of conservative media? In the autumn of the Bush administration, are Americans getting a little tired of the relentless cheerleading of the right-wing squawkers, the protestations that things are going great in Iraq, that we're all enjoying the fruits of trickle-down economics, that under Republican rule America basks in a glow of happiness and virtue?

The numbers seem to suggest as much. But before we start celebrating, we should stop and consider that the current historical moment provides a poor context for conservative talk shows. Their biggest problem is that their arguments necessarily grow more strained the longer Republicans hold power.

AMONG THE CORE LEITMOTIFS OF conservative media is the idea of *conservatives as underdogs*—the notion that the real power out there rests not with the leaders of government or the captains of industry, but with a sinister cabal of liberals who somehow manage, through nefarious techniques seldom fully revealed, to control our lives and subvert our country. These liberals wage war on Christmas, they undermine our brave boys overseas, they infect our children's minds with anti-Americanism, they keep good honest hardworking folk down. Only the undaunted courage of people like Bill O'Reilly, unafraid to stand up to these vicious despots, stands between us and national oblivion. (In September,

O'Reilly will release his new book, *Culture Warrior*, which will no doubt prove to be a measured and thoughtful discussion of our contemporary social conflicts.)

This posture made sense (from a conservative point of view) during the early years of the Clinton administration, when conservatives could more plausibly argue that the liberals bent on destroying America actually had the means to do so. And indeed, that was the period when Rush Limbaugh and his imitators experienced their explosive rise.

But pushing the line of liberal perfidy is no easy task when your party controls all three branches of government. Since 2001, conservatives have been fighting a desperate campaign of misdirection, waving their arms furiously to keep their followers' gaze somewhere other than at

Radio Factor, you've got your TV show, you got your books. You're the biggest guy in the media." O'Reilly's response? "Yeah, but I'm still an outsider and a maverick."

Even when they are in power, conservatives feel the need to convince themselves, and anyone else who will listen, that they are terribly oppressed by the enemy within, nearly helpless before the liberal Brobdingnagians holding them down. In a recent column, Ann Coulter said liberal complaints about constant conservative accusations of treason are "like listening to the Soviet Union complaining about the intimidation coming from Finland." That's right, the liberals are the mighty Soviet Union, and the conservatives are tiny Finland.

If you really believe this to be true, the fact that your friends are holding power

gress this November, then follow that up by winning the White House in 2008. Should that occur, not only would George W. Bush—who inspires more antagonism on the left than any president in memory—be gone, but Democrats would be the dominant party in Washington. Progressives would then find themselves in much the same situation conservatives do today.

Would the left lose the energy of the past few years, its empowering anger fading to the kind of mild disappointment so many felt during the Clinton years? As the urgency of defeating your enemies is replaced by the necessary but sometimes dreary task of propping up your sometime-allies, will progressives grow tired and complacent? And what effect would that have on the emerging progressive media?

One of the key differences between the rhetoric of conservative media and that of progressive media is that being aggrieved plays a far less central role in the latter. Without too much exaggeration one can trace the entire contemporary conservative worldview to the fact that back in the 1960s, the upper ranks of today's conservative movement felt left out and scorned by the cool kids who were getting high and getting laid. That period has come to symbolize all that conservatives believe about our culture: the idyllic prelapsarian age (the 1950s) displaced by a dark descent into the moral sewer, with the nightmarish effects still being felt.

The idea of their own oppression has been far less central to progressive rhetoric in recent years. Progressives don't need to be told that someone is trying to destroy their way of life in order to get riled up; indeed, they tend to be less concerned with their own oppression than with the fact that somebody else is being oppressed. But as a consequence, unlike conservatives, they don't have a ready narrative that structures their understanding of the political and social world no matter who is in charge.

And as we've seen over the past six years, anger is a powerful motivator. Anger at Bush and the Republican Congress was the critical factor that fed the rise of the progressive blogosphere, the most dynamic, growing part of the pro-

Appearing on Scarborough Country, I got tired of the host's complaints about the media and finally said, "You know who the elite media is, Joe? It's you."

those who actually hold power. This is certainly Beck's shtick; in his time on the air at Headline News, Beck has compared Al Gore to Adolf Hitler and called Hillary Clinton the Antichrist. In the past on his radio show he has said, "I'm thinking about killing Michael Moore," called Mexico a "dirtbag country," and noted that it "took me about a year to start hating the 9-11 victims' families."

This kind of talk, while disgusting, is by now old hat, which only serves to make the point: The right-wing cable fulminators are *over-dogs*. Last March, during an appearance on MSNBC's *Scarborough Country*, I got tired of the host's complaints about the "elite media" and finally said, "You know who the elite media is, Joe? It's you. You have your own television show." The expression on his face made clear that he thought I was insane. Then this past January, movie critic Richard Roeper responded to Bill O'Reilly's complaints that the "elite media" were ignoring the war on Christmas by saying much the same thing. "Bill, you are the elite media, you are the mainstream media," Roeper said. "You have a syndicated column, you've got *The*

makes both the ever-impending national moral catastrophe and your own suffering no less pressing. But there's the rub: Only the truest of true-believing conservatives could actually believe such a thing.

So should power in Washington change hands, O'Reilly, Limbaugh, Hannity, and the rest of the conservative media elite will no doubt be breaking out the champagne. Democrats with power, particularly a Democratic president, will give them an enemy whose "crimes" will fill the airwaves for as long as they can talk. They hated Clinton mostly because he kept beating them, and reality was no bar to the creation of faux scandals too numerous to mention. No matter which Democrat gets elected, he or she will come under the same assault. However absurd the attacks grow, they'll make for a good show, and the conservative media will likely gain back whatever audience they've lost. The more important question is, what will happen to the left?

AT THE MOMENT IT SEEMS A REASONABLE possibility that Democrats could take one or both houses of Con-

gressive media. Nonetheless, bloggers have worked hard to sow the seeds of a genuine, lasting progressive movement, one that transcends a given election and is concerned as much with long-term change as short-term victories. There seems little risk that the progressive blogosphere in a time of Democratic dominance would simply devolve into the kind of mindless cheerleading that currently characterizes so much of the conservative blogosphere. The denizens of the left blogosphere value their independence too much, and have gotten too used to seeing the Democratic establishment less as an ally than as an impediment.

But for all the left blogosphere's success, its audience is still relatively small.

Conservatives, on the other hand, succeeded in bringing to their media not only hardcore right-wingers but a healthy number of political independents (and even a few liberals) as well. They listen to Rush because he's entertaining, or watch O'Reilly because they like to see him shout down some "pinhead." Even if some of that audience is drifting away, what remains is still a healthy-sized group. If progressives want their media to grow as large and influential, the first thing they'll have to figure out is what to do when their side is on top. **TAP**

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BOOKS

SHIA POWER AND THE WEST

REACHING FOR POWER: THE SHI'A IN THE MODERN ARAB WORLD

BY YITZHAK NAKASH Princeton University Press, 226 pages, \$19.95

THE SHIA REVIVAL: HOW CONFLICTS WITHIN ISLAM WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE BY VALI NASR W.W. Norton, 287 pages, \$25.95

BY GILLES KEPEL

THE RISE OF SHIA POLITICAL PARTIES in U.S.-occupied Iraq, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's violent verbal attacks on Israel, the controversy over Iran's nuclear program, and the war in Lebanon have put political Shiism back on the world's agenda. Political Shiism made headlines when Ayatollah Khomeini seized power in Tehran after the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979, and it stayed on the front pages during the 1980s, with Shia Hezbollah taking Western hostages in Lebanon. After Khomeini's death in 1989, however, Western political concern about Islam focused more on Sunni movements engaged in jihad worldwide—most notably, al-Qaeda.

Not only did attention to Shiism fade during the past decade. In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, just when a clear grasp of Shia politics was most needed, partisanship also overshadowed informed analysis, and that may well be one reason why there was such a discrepancy between

the expected outcome of the invasion in 2003 and the present unforeseen mayhem. Ideologues are of little use in helping us understand why the United States now finds itself entangled with friendly Shia-dominated Iraq in chaos and hostile Shia Iran in the nuke race. Are Shias friend or foe? What about their relation to their Sunni co-religionists? Are the radicals in each sect ready to join forces in a sweeping Islamist tidal wave all across the Middle East, or are the divisions and hostility so deep that we are likely to see more of the strife that has turned Baghdad and other Iraqi cities into a slaughter field?

Two new books by prominent scholars of the Middle East shed light on these questions and bring us up to date on developments in Shia Islam. While Yitzhak Nakash's *Reaching for Power* deals solely with Arab Shias, Vali Nasr's *The Shia Revival* encompasses the broader Shia spectrum, including Iran and the Indian subcontinent, where the majority of the

world's Shia live. Both Nakash and Nasr have superb academic credentials, but they aim their new books at nonspecialist readers—a welcome choice, given how great a need there is to raise the quality of public debate.

Nakash has a rather upbeat view of the role that Shias in the Arab world can play in bringing about a reformation that could allow the region to move toward accommodation with the West. He contends that Ayatollah Sistani, the leading senior Shia cleric today, will have a pivotal role in that process. Many in the Bush administration also share the opinion that Shias could become the best allies of the United States in the Gulf region—after 9-11 demonstrated, in their view, that long-trusted Sunni monarchies, like Saudi Arabia, were unable or unwilling to rein in their radical jihadists. But such a shift in alliances, as implemented by the invasion of Iraq and the political empowerment of its Shia majority, was based on the ideological assumption that secular or liberal individuals and parties could take leading roles. Actually, neither Ahmed Chalabi nor Iyad Allawi—Washington favorites and longtime exiles in the West—was able to deliver for long, and the axis of Shia power in Iraq turned toward religious parties.

Here Nakash's book, based on a vast array of sources in Arabic, is a precious guide to understanding the real stakes in the conflicts among different religious and political tendencies in Arab countries. After a chapter titled "The Burdens of the Past," which puts into perspective the plight of the Shias as a dominated group in the Ottoman Empire, Nakash assesses the balance of forces in the three Arab areas with significant Shia presence: the Gulf monarchies, Lebanon, and Iraq.

In the Gulf, the Shias were, and still are to a large extent, contained politically. As a share of the total population, they range from 10 percent in Saudi Arabia—mainly in the oil-rich Eastern province—to 70 percent in Bahrain. Wahhabism, the prevalent interpretation of Sunni Islam in Saudi Arabia, is especially harsh on Shias, whom the Wahhabists persecute as infidels. In Bahrain, ruled by a Sunni royal family, Shia uneasiness has

led to a strong protest movement. In both countries, after socialism and nationalism had their heyday among the Shias until the late 1970s, and after the Iranian Revolution became a magnet in the 1980s, Gulf Arab Shias increasingly turned for guidance toward Najaf-based Ayatollah Sistani, whom they consider their authoritative *marja'* (referent).

Politically, after long being the underdogs, the Shia have now assumed more power in Lebanon, where they represent 40 percent of the population, and in Iraq, where they represent two-thirds. Demographic growth and Iranian help were factors in the Lebanese Shia revival; in Iraq, the American invasion ended Baathi rule, officially secular but Sunni and tribal-based. In both countries, as in the Gulf, religious movements captured the hearts

This optimistic view plays down the role of Iran's new radical president, Ahmadinejad, elected in the summer of 2005, and Iran's potential influence on Arab Shia networks. Both the Badr and the Sadr movements in Iraq, as well as Hezbollah in Lebanon, receive Iranian funds, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard has played a central role in training and equipping their paramilitary. With the West at odds with Iran's nuclear policy, couldn't Tehran fan the flames and unleash its allies and clients against the United States and Europe—as happened in Lebanon in the 1980s? Indeed, isn't Iran doing that again in Lebanon now? Is the religious Shia accommodation stance to be taken for granted, or is it a temporary attitude out of weakness, tantamount to *taqiyya* (disimulation)—the traditional Shia way of

blended with Iranian identity and created the only lasting political stronghold of the sect. In other countries, Shias also played a key political role. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, its ill-fated prime minister, were both Shias, though the more numerous Sunnis eventually brushed Shia influence aside. In the 1980s, under General Zia ul-Haq, Pakistan turned toward a politics of Islamization that was tantamount to Sunnification and set sectarian conflict ablaze.

Nasr rightly assesses the pivotal role of what he calls "Khomeini's moment" in creating Shia pride worldwide: Shiism had to be reckoned as a force of its own, even if Khomeini attempted to play down its specifics so as to turn the Iranian Revolution into the vanguard of radical Islam, irrespective of sectarian differences. Outside of Iran, however, the revolution's only lasting impact was on the Shias of Lebanon. And the radical-cum-Shia threat led to that unholy U.S.-Sunni alliance—the jihad war in Afghanistan—where CIA-backed and Gulf States-funded Sunni jihadist militants outmaneuvered the Iranians in championing militant Islamism. That "Battle of Islamic Fundamentalisms," as Nasr calls it, was won by Sunnis, far beyond the American godfather's expectations: The Afghan jihad was Osama bin Laden's training ground. As Washington had backed Sunnis against (revolutionary) Shias in the 1980s and 1990s, so it would play Shias against (jihadi) Sunnis after September 11.

Might the newly empowered Shias turn against their American sponsor, as happened with Sunni jihadis? Or will they side with democratic and Western worldviews against Sunni radicals? Much depends on the outcome of the Iraq War and the confrontation with Iran. To a large extent, Nasr and Nakash share the view that the fait accompli of Shia power in Iraq has tilted the Shia-Sunni balance toward a fairer distribution of forces and that Shias need to continue leaning toward the West, lest they again lose ground to their Sunni adversaries.

Although both authors completed their books after President Ahmadinejad's election, they were not able to take

The optimistic view of Shia power plays down the role of Iran's new president, Ahmadinejad, and Iran's potential influence on Arab Shia networks.

and minds of the Shia masses, but the movements in Lebanon and Iraq remain divided in their political loyalties. Some of their leaders, such as Hassan Nasrallah of Lebanese Hezbollah and Abdel Aziz al-Hakim and his Badr brigades in Iraq, pay allegiance to the Iranian leadership. Others such as Hussein Fadlallah of Lebanon are closer to Sistani, and some such as Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq are operating on their own. Even the radicals, Nakash contends, have moderated their views and accepted Western values such as democracy. Discarding the idea of an Islamic state, they now participate in the Western-leaning Lebanese and Iraqi governments.

"The shift of focus among Shi'is since the 1990s from violence to accommodation, and the assertion of Shi'i power in Iraq, have signaled the rise of the Shi'is as a force that could potentially spur reform in the region," Nakash argues. "The United States would need to accept the consequences of that development, recognize that not all Islamists are alike, and develop a broad strategy for the Middle East that actively engages the moderates as part of the solution."

paying lip service while facing oppression until the day of empowerment comes?

Nasr's *The Shia Revival* takes a broader perspective and attempts to deal with Shiism as a whole. His aim is "to explain why there is a Shia-Sunni conflict, why has it become more salient of late and what it will mean for both the future of the Middle East and the Muslim world's relations with the West." The Iraq War and the unprecedented Shia majority rise to power, he contends, have so changed political realities as to require a fresh assessment of Shia identity and the fault lines with Sunni Islam.

The book starts with an outline of the peculiarities of the Shia way in terms of creed and rituals, its emphasis on martyrdom and mourning, and the history of persecution that many Shia have suffered at the hands of hard-line Sunni powers, boosted by a vehement polemical literature dating from the Middle Ages (which one could find unchanged on the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Web site). Nasr also examines the role of the Shia dynasties, such as the Fatimids of Egypt and the Safavids of Iran, where Shiism

account of his later vitriolic statements on Israel or his nuclear blackmail policy. They recommend engaging Iran, on the grounds that its interests as a state will prevail over a worn-out Islamist mystique. Tehran will have to find a way to accommodate the West if it wants to develop its nuclear capacity and benefit fully from the Shia revival. Whether or not the West ought to accommodate Ah-

madinejad's government is another matter, well worth a debate, which ought now to be far better informed thanks to *Reaching for Power* and *The Shia Revival*. **TAP**

Gilles Kepel is a professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris and the author of The Revenge of God, Jihad, and The War for Muslim Minds, all available in English as well as French.

BOOKS

BE NOT AFRAID

KINGDOM COMING: THE RISE OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

BY MICHELLE GOLDBERG W.W. Norton, 224 pages, \$23.95

OUR ENDANGERED VALUES: AMERICA'S MORAL CRISIS

BY JIMMY CARTER Simon & Schuster, 224 pages, \$25.00

THE FAITHS OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS BY DAVID L. HOLMES

Oxford University Press, 240 pages, \$20.00

AMERICAN THEOCRACY: THE PERIL AND POLITICS OF RADICAL RELIGION, OIL, AND BORROWED MONEY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY KEVIN PHILLIPS Viking, 480 pages, \$26.95

THE BAPTIZING OF AMERICA: THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT'S PLANS FOR THE REST OF US BY JAMES RUDIN

Thunder's Mouth Press, 300 pages, \$25.00

BY PETER STEINFELS

THE WORD, AS STEPHEN COLBERT would say, is ... *THEOCRACY*! Although Kevin Phillips's best-selling volume has three parts, devoted to the politics of oil, religion, and debt respectively, it is "theocracy" that gets pride of place in his title and analysis.

"The fight between secular modernity and religious authority is an old one," writes Michelle Goldberg in *Kingdom Coming*. "Right now, however, is high tide for theocratic fervor."

For James Rudin, "a specter is haunting America," an "effort to change America into a Christian theocracy."

Exposés of the religious right are nothing new. But they are now appearing at a quickened pace and a greatly heightened pitch of alarm. Once, the religious right was viewed as threatening specific liberal concerns, from *Roe v. Wade* to freedom from government-sponsored proselytizing. Today, the worry is nothing less than the strangulation of liberal democracy

itself at the hands of a cabal of Republican evangelicals backed by a populist movement of angry true believers. Instead of a return to the America of the 1950s, the danger seems to be a return to the Europe of the 1930s.

"Social conservatism is not in itself fascistic, of course," Goldberg allows, "But the combination of repression, populism, and paranoia, the fear of decadence as a monstrous plot against the nation, carries frightening echoes."

By these standards, Jimmy Carter's *Our Endangered Values* is virtually matter-of-fact. Never mind that it is the cri de coeur of a deeply devout Baptist who in the past would not have blushed at having his traditional evangelical Christianity labeled fundamentalist, but is now appalled by a new species of fundamentalism that he believes is distorting his Christianity and endangering the nation. Carter's book belongs to a new genre of books written by Christians either to im-

mune fellow Christians against the blandishments of this fundamentalism or to arm them with arguments against the religious right's positions on war, poverty, gender, marriage, homosexuality, capital punishment, and other issues.

Different in tone but pertinent in subject matter is David L. Holmes's *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, a sensible primer that maps the religious landscape of 18th-century America, carefully distinguishing between non-Christian and Christian Deism as well as orthodox Christianity. Holmes puts the lie to religious-right fantasies of America's founding generation as pious Christians in the mode of later orthodox evangelicals. The book, however, may also confound secularist assumptions that the religious beliefs, ties, and sensibilities of Christian Deists (or "Deistic Christians") such as Washington or even the later Jefferson—beliefs in prayer, providence, the example of Jesus, and life after death, for example—were only superficially different from the skeptical free thought of a Thomas Paine.

The other books, though written from different perspectives and for different audiences, have a common aim: to describe and analyze the nature and the extent of a looming threat and thereby to mobilize a countermovement. Which raises two questions: Are their descriptions and analyses accurate? And will they, in fact, mobilize an effective countermovement?

In the case of the more far-reaching efforts, by Phillips, Rudin, and Goldberg, my answer to both questions is no. I learned a number of valuable—and disturbing—things from these writers, and one of them, Rabbi James Rudin, an outstanding figure in the field of Jewish-Christian relations, is an admired friend. More important, I share their convictions that the Bush administration has done long-lasting harm to America and its institutions and that a major factor in this evil has been the ideological and organizational backing of the religious right.

But the idea, increasingly voiced by left-of-center activists and intellectuals, that religion is the driving force of the administration's policies and the leading threat to American democracy is exag-

gerated and misplaced. Phillips, Rudin, and Goldberg themselves regularly stick qualifying phrases into their declarations of alarm. They know that fanaticism and nuttiness, including downright dangerous nuttiness, can be found all over the place in a religious and political landscape as vast and diverse as America's. And they know better than to equate hardcore religious-right leaders and organizations, let alone the still smaller kernel of literal theocrats, with evangelical Americans in general, who constitute between 30 percent and 40 percent of the

logues of Christian Reconstructionism and right-wing figures of some influence in Republican politics. But Phillips and Goldberg, at least, are aware of the flaws in this procedure.

"Reading about the webs and connections between reconstructionism and the rest of the religious right," writes Phillips, "... calls to mind the exposés published by conservatives fifty or sixty years ago that linked various progressive organizations to communist front groups and fellow travelers." He's absolutely right. But then he neatly parr ies his own admission by de-

and "just as accurate" and "larger-than-realized" (by whom?), Phillips twists to his advantage an obvious weakness in his argument. Others will have to judge Phillips's treatment of oil and debt; his treatment of religion is polemic pretending to be scholarship.

Christian Reconstructionism and its weird "dominion theology" probably play a greater role in the writings of the religious right's critics than they ever have in the wider evangelical world. That wider evangelical world is precisely what is missing from these books. Rudin has a chapter focusing on such matters as evangelicals' enthusiasm for Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and the takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention by theological and political conservatives. But neither he nor Phillips nor Goldberg make any reference to the extensive studies of evangelicals and other conservative believers by Alan Wolfe, Christian Smith, and a raft of social scientists. Phillips tries to lend scholarly authority to his foreboding of theocracy with a blizzard of (selective) facts and figures concerning Christianity over many centuries and several nations, but when it comes to the present-day confluence of religion and politics he takes his cues from a familiar set of anti-religious-right articles, books, and Web sites.

It is symptomatic that of Phillips's hundreds of footnotes dealing with, for the most part, Protestant theology and politics, only one refers to *Christianity Today*, the flagship monthly of the nation's wider evangelical world. Theologically and politically, *Christianity Today* is unquestionably conservative. It is also moderate, reflective, and self-questioning, especially about evangelical ventures into politics. The danger of theocracy might look a little different if, alongside right-wing partisans and theological crazies, these writers had paid a little attention to this leading journal that in recent months has published articles like "Five Reasons Why Torture Is Always Wrong" and "The ACLU Is Not Evil."

Christianity Today does not rate even one footnote in *Kingdom Coming*, although *The Origins of Totalitarianism* rates four. (Nothing at all is footnoted in



Hand in Hand: With the GOP, yes. But true theocrats? No.

population and who have swung massively into the Republican camp in the last three decades.

The task, in other words, is not simply to shine light on faith-based anti-democratic currents but to map context, patterns, proportions, and trends, tracing not only real connections but also deep differences between what's marginal and what's central. This task, in the end, they fail to accomplish.

Take, for example, the frequent references to "dominionism" or Christian Reconstructionism. From one of the many crevices of American Christianity, this obscure sect spun out a genuine doctrine of theocratic rule fierce enough to give nightmares to any believer in democracy. Phillips, Rudin, and Goldberg dwell on links, a few of them new to me, between the little-known ideo-

claring that the recent release of Soviet files "has confirmed some of what the conservatives were charging, and today's liberal and progressive muckrakers are probably just as accurate in suggesting a larger-than-realized influence of Christian Reconstructionists."

This is a typical example of Phillips's efforts to demonstrate the dubious with pseudo-concessions, slippery logic, and adroitly placed weasel words. So what about those complicated spider webs proving that the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the civil-rights movement were communist enterprises because A went to this meeting or belonged to this group and then cooperated with B or provided funds for C? Were they accurate accounts or bizarre and demagogic redbaiting? By deftly framing his response with "some of what the conservatives were charging"

The Baptizing of America.) But *Kingdom Coming* is based substantially on the author's own intrepid and energetic reporting. Goldberg has survived visits to a Colorado homeschooling convention, a traveling road show celebrating former judge Roy Moore's campaign to display the Ten Commandments in courthouses, the Ohio megachurches that turned out antigay-marriage voters for Bush in 2004, an anti-evolution conference at the ultra-right Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, and various faith-based addiction and abstinence programs. Goldberg's reports are full of concrete, eye-opening detail, made all the more convincing by her conscientious efforts to keep things in perspective. She regularly concedes that America is not "on the cusp of religious totalitarianism" or "close to becoming a theocracy."

But despite these concessions (which she tends immediately to minimize), perspective is ultimately what is missing from *Kingdom Coming*, not because of Goldberg's intentions but because of her ideology and the very nature of her project. If I were to visit only the wilder shores of liberal, left, feminist, sexual, and environmental politics, reporter's notebook in hand, I would probably get a similarly worrisome view of the prospects for American life and institutions. (Doing that is, in fact, a cottage industry for the religious right.)

When Goldberg moves away from direct reporting to larger conclusions, whether about faith-based social services, crisis pregnancy centers, or the intelligent-design controversy, she turns to partisan sources rather than anything resembling dispassionate ones. Anyone reading her one-sided recounting of the discrimination charges made by Salvation Army employees in New York, for example, would be baffled why the federal trial court has largely ruled against them. When she states flatly that crisis pregnancy centers in general "have long, well-documented records of lying to women about their sexual health," is she unaware that she is repeating not proven fact but an artifact of the hardball polemics about abortion?

Does any of this really matter? If the

danger is so great, is hyperbole or inaccuracy to be counted perhaps not as a vice but a virtue?

It matters, first of all, because it deflects attention from what remain the major sources of the Bush administration's disastrous and ominous policies, perfectly secular rationales for trimming government, cutting taxes, opening the door to torture, circumventing congressional and judicial oversight in establishing secret surveillance programs, and relying on military strength while belittling international institutions.

These approaches had percolated for years in conservative think tanks, among K Street lobbyists, and on the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal*. Can anyone really believe that the administration's energy policy would have been different absent the speculations of end-times theology? K Street and the lingering doctrine of supply-side economics, not Christian Reconstructionists and biblical inerrantism, drive the administration's fiscal follies. The officials sending the United States to war in Iraq—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Feith, Libby—did not come from the religious right, let alone the larger evangelical constituency. One can always trot out the regrettable figure of John Ashcroft to prove the religious right's ascendancy in the Bush administration, which makes as much sense as pointing to Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice to prove the ascendancy of blacks.

ABORTION, SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, embryonic stem-cell research, teenage sexual abstinence, the public display of religious symbols, the teaching of evolution—these are the issues on which conservative Christian beliefs are the driving force and that enable the organized religious right to get traction among evangelical and conservative Catholic voters, who end up, more passively than not, buying into the rest of the Bush agenda. However much these issues exercise liberals and the left, they are also issues that the Bush administration has generally addressed in cautious, halting, inconsistent, or purely token fashion.

Exaggeration and inaccuracy also

matter because they decrease any chance of mobilizing the opposition to the country's current course, as these writers ardently desire. They draw bold and broad lines between empiricism, science, tolerance, rationality, and democracy, on the one hand, and faith, theology, revelation, persecution, irrationality, and authoritarianism, on the other; and they assign whatever they like or dislike to one side of the divide or the other. This dualism disregards rational dimensions of faith and theology (as well as faith dimensions of science and rationality) and neglects the historical reality that the modern world of empiricism, science, and Enlightenment reason has produced its own irrational nightmares. Treating the moral questions that agitate conservative Christians as obviously settled beyond all reasoned argument does not just target theocrats. It sprays bullets widely into the ranks of moderate evangelicals, conservative Catholics, and even many centrist and liberal believers.

Goldberg ends with recommendations, some sensible, some quirky, for building a progressive movement to counter the dangerous brew of fundamentalist Christianity and belligerent nationalism. Among them is the advice that progressive should "win their neighbors over, not just beat them in court."

That is not likely to happen without a significantly greater effort to understand those neighbors and their beliefs. At the end of her book, calling for a movement to oppose the theocrats, Goldberg runs up all the old banners of the war between secularism and religion, pitting "freedom and Enlightenment" against "stale constricting dogmas" and "holy books." Reading those words, I question not only whether I—and a lot of people like me—belong in her ranks, but also whether she, or Kevin Phillips, or even my friend Jim Rudin, really want us. **TAP**

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Memo to House Democrats

BY ROBERT B. REICH

DEMOCRATS: ODDS ARE, COME NOVEMBER 7, YOU will gain the 15 seats you need to take back the House (the odds are much lower in the Senate). So it's not too early to start thinking about what you should do during the two years leading up to the 2008 presidential election.

You'll be sorely tempted to showcase the Bush administration in all its lurid awfulness. Imagine an endless parade of witnesses offering shocking details of Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, torture camps, pay-offs to Halliburton, Defense Department usurpations, Iraq's descent into civil war, and other cover-ups, deceptions, data manipulations, suppressions of science, crass incompetencies, and outright corruptions. Out of all of these hearings would come a bill of particulars so damning that every 2008 Democratic candidate running for everything from Indianapolis City Council to president will be swept into office on a riptide of public outrage.

After all, didn't House Republicans during the Clinton years wreak all the damage they could even when there wasn't much to complain about? Recall Dan Burton, the Indiana Republican who, while chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, issued truck loads of White House subpoenas along with a sulphurous geyser of unsupported accusations. Why shouldn't Henry Waxman, who will fill the same shoes, give as good as the Clinton White House got? Imagine how John Dingell, who will run the House Energy and Commerce Committee, could expose the intimacies between the Bushies and Big Oil; what John Conyers, in command of the House Judiciary Committee, could reveal about Bush's trouncing of Americans' civil liberties; or the job Barney Frank, at Financial Services, could do

on the administration's nefarious links to Wall Street. Hell, why not try to impeach Bush?

Warning: Resist all such temptation.

YOU WON'T BE CREDIBLE. THE PUBLIC would see the investigations and hearings as partisan wrangling. They might even cause the public to question what it already knows, allowing Republicans to argue it was all conjured up by partisan zealots from the start.

You won't get any new information anyway. Your subpoena power would have no effect on this White House. You'd end up fighting in federal courts for the whole two years. Besides, there's enough dirt out there already to sink any administration. Although cowed at the start of the administration, the mainstream media have done a fairly good job since.

Moreover, Bush is the wrong target. His popularity could hardly be lower than it is already, which means 2008 Republican candidates in all but the reddest of red states will distance themselves from this White House. John McCain, should he be the Republican nominee, won't be tarnished by Bush at all because in the public's mind McCain is a maverick and independent. He'll remain above the par-

tisan mud throwing while you'd just mire Democrats in it.

Finally, you and your colleagues have spent the last six years whining and complaining. That was understandable. There was ample reason, and you didn't have the power to do otherwise. But do that when you do have some power, and you'll confirm the Republican message that Democrats are pessimistic Eeyores, obsessed with what's wrong with America and clueless about what to do or how to fix it.

HERE'S A BETTER WAY TO GO. USE THE two years instead to lay the groundwork for a new Democratic agenda. Bring in expert witnesses. Put new ideas on the table. Frame the central issues boldly. Don't get caught up in arid policy-wonkdom.

For example, instead of framing basic economic questions as whether to roll back Bush's tax cuts, make it about how to recreate good jobs at good wages and rebuild the middle class. Consider ideas for doing this through trade policy, industrial policy, antitrust, publicly financed research and development, and stronger trade unions.

Instead of framing the central foreign-policy question as whether we should have invaded Iraq, make it how to partition Iraq into Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish zones while America gets out. Focus the national-security debate on how to control loose nukes and fissile material, and secure American ports. Encourage direct negotiations with North Korea and Iran. On energy and the environment, offer

ideas for developing new non-fossil-based energy industries in America, and how to ratify a realistic Kyoto accord.

Help the public understand how these are all related—why, for example, we'll never have a sane foreign policy unless we reduce our dependence on oil. And most important, be positive. Bush's shameful record is plain. Start the new Democratic record. Help America dream again. **TAP**

*If you take back
the House, you'll
be tempted to focus
on Bush's sins.
Don't: Think big,
think positive.*